

# INDULGENCES

*Their Origin  
Nature & Development*

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# INDULGENCES

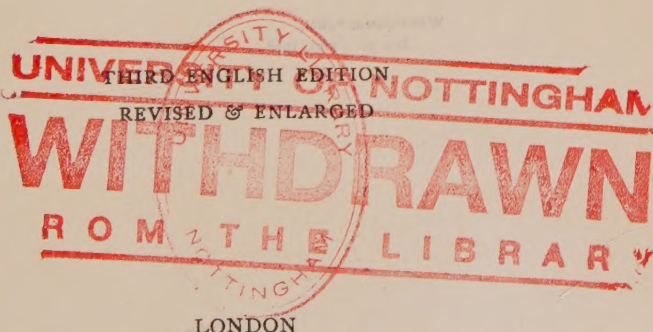
## *Their Origin Nature & Development*

BY HIS EMINENCE

CARDINAL ALEXIS H. M. LÉPICIER

O.S.M.

“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which a man having found hid it, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field.”—*Matt.* xiii. 44.



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## PREFACE

THE first idea of writing a book on the subject of Indulgences presented itself to the author's mind while engaged in giving some lectures on this important subject. The thought gradually impressed him that both enlightened believers might find a confirmation of their faith and inquisitive minds assistance in their search after truth, if this point of Catholic dogma were set before them in a concise manner and yet with all possible clearness. For the doctrine of Indulgences is closely connected with the main tenets of our faith, such as the imputability of sin and good works, the efficacy of atonement and regeneration, the Communion of Saints and the power of the keys.

But such a study, he found, would not be satisfactorily complete unless a sketch of the history of the practice of Indulgences in the Church were added to the doctrinal exposition of the dogma. Holy Scripture, then, was first to be consulted and asked to put forth its own evidence on the matter in hand. Then history was to be referred to, from Apostolic times to the period of persecutions and of subsequent peace and thence through the pilgrimages, crusades and jubilees of the Middle Ages, down to the epoch of the Reformation, and from it to our own days.

Again, it became evident to the author's mind that a right understanding of the doctrine and practice regarding Indulgences is not to be obtained, unless a brief account of the penitential discipline as used in

the primitive Church is added to the exposition of Catholic truth. Moreover, those practices of earlier days should not be a dead letter for a son of Holy Church, as they teach him what his forefathers in the faith were able to bear; and so the recollection of that discipline is calculated to act on him as a spur, rousing him from his torpor and urging him to regulate his own conduct by what he knows of the generosity and steadfastness of his fathers in the faith. Apart, then, from the close connection which the penitential practices have with our own subject, the interest which they should rouse in a Christian heart will, we trust, be a sufficient apology for the introduction of several chapters bearing on that matter.

It will, therefore, be found that this book is not a "Raccolta," nor an abridgement of the many decrees which have, at different times, been issued on the practice of indulgences by the Roman Congregations. It rather aims at giving a genuine exposition of this point of Catholic teaching, viewed in connection with the other tenets of our creed and the perpetual practice of the Church.

Ever since the first appearance of this work in 1895 it has been the author's care to continue his researches on this all-important subject. Not content with submitting the dogmatic teaching to a fresh examination and carefully verifying the historical facts connected with it, he has endeavoured, by every opportunity afforded him, to consult works both ancient and modern either on the subject of indulgences or on matters akin to it. The fruit of these new researches appeared, in 1897, in an Italian edition, which, although assuming to be a translation from the English work, was in reality rather a new book altogether, having nothing in common with the original except

as regards the main conclusions and the order followed in the distribution of the various parts.<sup>1</sup>

About the same time a writer, well known for his systematic attack on Catholic practices, brought out a book on indulgences, their origin and development, which created a certain amount of sensation. This writer was Mr. Henry Charles Lea, LL.D., who, in a bulky volume of 629 pages,<sup>2</sup> concentrated all his arguments to the evident object of justifying the charge brought on indulgences by the Twenty-second Article of the Church of England, which declares "the Romish doctrine concerning . . . pardons . . . [to be] a fond thing, vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God."

At first sight the endless list of references, generally exact as to title and page, put forth by the author, stands out as a mighty army in battle array ready to overthrow the teaching of the Catholic Church on pardons and indulgences. A mere perusal of Mr. Lea's work makes it evident that his purpose was to direct his forces skilfully towards showing Catholic theologians busy in drawing the institution of indulgences out of nothing and vainly endeavouring to conciliate this doctrine with Scripture and tradition. In the meantime the author lost no opportunity of representing the prelates of the Church as eagerly laying hold of the system, in which they believed only as a financial device, to satiate their greed of money by artfully drawing on the wealth of the Christian people through the granting of untimely and unwarranted pardons.

<sup>1</sup> The title is *Le Indulgenze, loro Origine, Natura e Svolgimento*, opera tradotta dall' Inglese dal Sac. Luigi Cappelli. Siena, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church*, vol. iii., "Indulgences," by Henry Charles Lea, LL.D. Philadelphia: Lea Brothers and Co., 1896.

Though presented as a bold defiance to Catholic doctrine, Mr. Lea's colossal statue is easily found on examination to stand on feet of clay. The work bears such evident marks of the mould which it was forcibly made to fit, that it must be pronounced to be a presentation of subjective views rather than an exposition of historical truth. For, notwithstanding the exactness of a good many statements, the lines on which the work has been drawn are mapped out by such ill-disguised prepossessions as to leave no doubt about the intention that guided its author. We all know how often false inferences may follow from true premisses. Hence we may say of this volume what a writer has said of the same author's previous work on Auricular Confession—that "it may be read as a curiosity, but not as a history—not even as a history that one might think it worth his while to refute."<sup>1</sup>

However this may be, the fact is that many readers, not having the means to study the question of indulgences for themselves, may probably have been dazzled by the show of erudition which Mr. Lea's book presents. Hence, in further examining this subject in view of a new French edition, the present writer thought it his duty carefully to read Mr. Lea's work, and to select here and there such points as seemed to him to be deserving of special consideration, confronting them with what true history teaches and the Catholic Church really holds.

The result of this inquiry was then embodied in the French translation of the Italian edition on indulgences which appeared in 1901,<sup>2</sup> containing, besides many

<sup>1</sup> Rev. H. Casey, S.J., *Notes on a History of Auricular Confession*, Philadelphia, 1899, p. 4. Cf. also A. Boudinhon: *Sur l'Histoire de la Pénitence*, *Rev. d'Hist. et de Litt. relig.*, 1897, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Indulgences, leur Origine, leur Nature, leur Développement*, 2 vols., Paris, 1902.



remarks on Mr. Lea's works, considerable additions both on the practice and the objective value of indulgences, the author having previously had the opportunity of reconsidering his subject, particularly in an Essay published on the occasion of the Great Jubilee granted by Leo XIII to the whole world in 1900.<sup>1</sup>

The first English edition of this work was published in 1895. The second edition of 1906 having now been out of print for some time, the present volume is offered to the public. The work of revision has consisted chiefly in making the additions and corrections necessary for bringing the work up to date. Full use has been made of the Codex Juris which in Cann. 911-936 states succinctly the general legislation of the Church, and wherever the references to papal documents have appeared in less available sources, the volume and section of the "Fontes" of Cardinal Gasparri have been indicated instead. Most of the authorities quoted are still of the first importance, but in many cases a reference has been given to books and articles of more recent date. This applies particularly to the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* and the *Dictionnaire Apoloétique de la Foi Catholique*. In many instances the emendations of the author, which escaped the attention of the reviser of the last English edition, have been inserted, and throughout the work any fresh points of outstanding importance (as, for example, the Jubilee of 1925) have been introduced into the argument.

Among recent compilers of ecclesiastical documents referring to indulgences, special mention should be made of Dr. Nikolaus Paulus, who, in a series of articles

<sup>1</sup> *De Indulgentiarum Valore Disquisitio Theologica*, Romae 1900. Extracted from the monthly periodical, *Analecta Ecclesiastica*, January, p. 30; February, p. 73.

first published in different German periodicals and now arranged in book form,<sup>1</sup> has produced the most valuable first-hand collection on the subject. It has been our care patiently to go through these dense volumes in order to bring the present work into harmony with the various documents therein contained.

We must observe, however, that this collection, commendable as it is, would have proved much more useful to the ordinary reader if timely observations, such as are suggested by circumstances of time, places, and persons, had accompanied the laying out of such bulky and somewhat undigested materials. Just as on entering a very large and intricate building a guide is necessary to show the way through a labyrinth of corridors, so also it is impossible, without a proper key to the understanding of this collection, to form an exact estimate of the purport of the many and various documents collected in Dr. Paulus's book.

This key is precisely the authentic teaching of that same Church that has issued these documents. It may be hoped that the present work, especially directed to enlighten Catholics and non-Catholics alike on the recognized teaching of indulgences, will help an un-biassed mind in its investigations of this important subject and in the interpretation of these documents. A walk through archæological grounds would be of little profit without a guide to interpret the monuments and relics of olden times.

With regard to the administration of penance in the primitive Church, the author wishes it to be understood that his intention, in introducing an account of the ancient penitential practices, has been to illustrate the dogma of Indulgences, with which these practices

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte des Ablasses im Mittelalter, vom Ursprunge bis zur Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts.* Von Dr. Nikolaus Paulus. 3 vols. Ferd. Schöningh in Paderborn, 1922, 1923.

are intimately connected, rather than to pronounce a final judgement on this much-debated subject. Everyone knows that there remains yet much uncertainty about the way in which the penitential discipline was carried on in the first ages, and that the state of historical research does not yet allow of a definite conclusion regarding the precise manner in which it was then administered, especially as uniformity was far from being the rule in the Church at large. However that may be, what we can gather is enough to illustrate the dogma of Indulgences with sufficient certainty and to guide us in tracing the wonderful development which this practice has undergone in the course of ages.

There is a growing tendency in England to-day to translate the Latin "*Indulgentia*" by the English word "*Pardon*." Far from being an innovation, the word has all the advantages of ancient pre-Reformation use. It expresses more exactly what is meant by an indulgence, and is less open to being misunderstood by non-Catholics. But, on the whole, the word "*Indulgence*" is still in possession, and confusion might be caused if it were altogether excluded in a popular work at the present stage.

May the following pages, offered as a tribute of thanksgiving to the Incarnate Word "who was bruised for our sins,"<sup>1</sup> prove useful to Catholics and Protestants alike. May they enlighten them on the nature and value of the Holy Pardons and rouse their hearts to a greater sentiment of love for our Blessed Redeemer, who purchased them for us by shedding his most Precious Blood, and of compassion for mankind, for whose benefit they were instituted. May the faithful avail themselves of these holy treasures not only for their own benefit, but also for the advantage of the

<sup>1</sup> Isa. liii 5.

holy souls in Purgatory, who being incapable of helping themselves, cry out to their friends on earth: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Job xix 21.



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## CHAPTER IX

## LOSS OR GAIN

*Indulgences in our own Day*

"For the wages of sin is death; but the grace of God life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord."—*Rom. vi 23.*

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PART I  
THE DOCTRINE OF INDULGENCES





## CHAPTER I DEATH AND THE TREE OF LIFE

### *The Nature of Sin and of Good Works*

“Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and shall be filled with their own devices.”—*Prov. i 31.*

Death, the consequence of sin—The double guilt of sin—The doctrine of satisfaction—The sacrament of Penance—True contrition needed for the remission of sin—Luther and penance—Contrition—Value of satisfaction—Three distinct cases—The superabundant satisfaction of Christ—The communion of Saints—Peter of Blois to the monks of Chichester—The Church militant, suffering and triumphant—The mystery of suffering.

THE works of God, as they come forth from his hands, are perfect. What the crowd said of Jesus as man, when he opened the ears and unloosed the tongue of the deaf mute, may be said of Christ as God, and of all his works: “He hath done all things well.”<sup>1</sup> Scripture, moreover, tells us that “when the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the furniture of them, God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet amid all visible creatures there was one, the last of all God’s works, and so perfect that, in calling it into existence, the Almighty would appear to have set into play the infinite treasures of his wisdom, power and goodness. That creature was man. God made him to His own image and likeness, and incorruptible.<sup>3</sup> He further raised him to the supernatural

<sup>1</sup> Mark vii 37.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. ii 1; i 31.

<sup>3</sup> Wisd. ii 23.

order, that is, to eternal life, which consists in the vision of the divine essence, not "through a glass in a dark manner, but face to face,"<sup>1</sup> and in unbounded love of his supreme goodness which transforms the soul. This work, however, the most beautiful that had come forth from the hands of God, was marred by his enemy the devil, jealous of man; and "by the envy of the devil death came into the world."<sup>2</sup>

It was, then, by sin that death entered this world, and it could not have got in if man himself had not opened the door to it; for God had given man immortality, and "the gifts of God are without repentance."<sup>3</sup>

Thus sin and death came on earth hand in hand. Now original sin is transmitted to every child of Adam for all time, past and to come; and hence from the days of the first man death has overtaken the whole human race. "As by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned."<sup>4</sup>

To prevent the action of death upon man God had planted "the tree of life in the midst of Paradise,"<sup>5</sup> the fruit of which had the power of preserving him in a perpetual state of health and strength. But when man was driven forth from Paradise, on account of sin, he could no longer have access to the tree of life. Moreover the death caused by sin was not merely that of the body, but also that of the soul. The soul remained deprived of God's friendship and the body was exposed to the fatal influence of its own elements constantly at war with one another.

God, however, who is essentially good, cannot be conquered by the devil. He willed therefore that "where sin had abounded, grace should more abound."<sup>6</sup> So God made a decree that another tree should be given

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii 12.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. v 12.

<sup>2</sup> Wisd. ii 24.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. ii 9.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xi 29.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. v 20.

to man in his fallen state. This tree should not be in the old Paradise, but its presence should make a new Paradise of the whole earth; it should produce not one fruit, like the former plant, but two marvellous fruits. The first of these should restore the life of the soul by saving man from eternal death; the second should be a remedy for the temporal punishments which naturally follow on sin, the chief of which is the death of the body.

This is not the place for speaking of the first of these fruits, which is none other than "the grace of God through Jesus Christ,"<sup>1</sup> that grace which flows in upon us by virtue of the blood of Jesus to blot out sin and to give us eternal life. We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, "whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."<sup>2</sup>

We propose to speak here of the second fruit only. This consists in the satisfaction made by Christ, who "hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows",<sup>3</sup> and this satisfaction has for its effect the remission of that temporal debt which our sins make us contract, as will now be shown.

2. In the act of deliberately offending God the soul contracts a double obligation. First, it contracts a stain or spot of guilt, *reatus culpae*; a blemish that turns it into an object of repulsion, disgust, and execration to him whom it has offended. This stain is effaced solely by divine grace, which alone has the power of restoring the soul to its former beauty. Secondly, it incurs the debt of penalty, *reatus poenae*; a debt for which the soul itself must satisfy divine justice, and which can be effaced by satisfaction only. For the man who in offending God chooses to gratify himself by opposing the divine law, deprives his Maker

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii 25.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii 24, 25.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. liii 4.

of that tribute of faithful submission which he was bound to offer him as a servant to his Master; and this flagrant act of injustice constitutes a real debt to God, for which the offender must make satisfaction either by a self-imposed or by an appointed penalty.<sup>1</sup>

We have a figure of this in the Apocalypse,<sup>2</sup> where the sinner is typified by fallen Babylon, which is represented as having become the habitation of devils and the hold of every unclean spirit and of every hateful bird, whence it is condemned to suffer in proportion to the gravity of its fault: "As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her."<sup>3</sup>

If, therefore, the sinner would obtain from God the remission of his offences, it is not enough for him to determine to change his life and henceforth to avoid sin and its occasions; he must also make reparation for the past.

3. When, in the sixteenth century, the Reformers undertook to revise the Creed and bring it back, as they said, to its primitive form, one of their first acts was to attack the principle of "satisfaction" for sin and to condemn the practice of it. Under pretext of exalting the efficaciousness of our Lord's passion, they reduced to nothing the value of our own satisfaction. They said it is an outrageous presumption on the part of man, whose very power is but weakness, to pretend that he can make satisfactory reparation to an infinite God; and that to attempt adding anything, no matter what, to the unlimited satisfaction performed by Jesus Christ, is to throw doubt on its completeness. This is equivalent to turning the work of Christ into the destruction of free will and the annihilation of personal activity. Should it really be so, our Saviour's

<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Thomas, *Summa Theol.* III, q. lxxvi, art. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Apoc. xviii 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* v 7.



passion would have, as regards our own satisfaction for sin, an effect similar to that of those enormous plants whose corrosive sap prevents all other plants from living beneath their shade. It would no longer be the life-giving stream of grace, fertilising the garden of the soul, but rather the burning sun which dries up the barren sand of the desert.

But it is difficult not to see the proofs furnished by Holy Scripture in support of the divine precept of satisfaction. St John the Baptist began his mission by saying to the crowds that asked him for baptism: "Bring forth fruits worthy of penance."<sup>1</sup> And the conclusion of our Lord's preaching was the reiteration of this same commandment: "But except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish."<sup>2</sup>

But man, it is said, cannot offer to God a "satisfaction" equal to the offence, since the offence is infinite. Most true; nevertheless it is hard to believe that man may satisfy his offended neighbour, yet not be able to satisfy God, who is pleased to "show forth his power by sparing and having mercy exceedingly."<sup>3</sup>

It is not necessary that our satisfaction should be in all points equal to the offence. The adoration and thanksgiving that we always owe to God, in virtue of his supreme majesty and of the blessings that he bestows on us, could never equal his greatness and infinite dignity. However, we are not, for all that, dispensed from offering him such homage, nor does our personal deficiency give us any excuse for not fulfilling this duty. Again, because children cannot love and respect their parents adequately, does it follow that they are not bound to do so at all? So then it is enough for us to make satisfaction to the limit of our own powers, even as it is enough for us to love God

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xiii 5.

<sup>3</sup> Collect for the tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

and our parents as much as we are able. The only thing demanded of us is that our satisfaction should be proportionate to our faculties. If it is true that the offence itself may be called infinite because it is directed against the infinite sovereignty of God, it is also true that our satisfaction may in a certain sense be said to be infinite, when it is inspired by grace and accepted by the infinite mercy of God.<sup>1</sup>

It is further objected that Christ satisfied fully for us all by the merits of his sacred Passion, and that hence our satisfaction is not only superfluous but even an insult offered to him.

Undoubtedly our Lord fully accomplished his own work. "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do,"<sup>2</sup> he himself said to his Father. Nothing was wanting on his part for our perfect reconciliation with God. But then this satisfaction has to be applied—that is, turned to use—and this is the work of man. Every man has power to accept or reject the influence of divine grace, to make fruitful or leave barren, for himself, the passion of Christ.

God then treats man according to the dignity bestowed upon him. The lower creatures did not receive the gift of reason, therefore it is God who moves them and this without their own consent of which they are incapable. Man, contrariwise, is freely moved by God, because he is endowed with free will. The work of justification is not the construction of a material temple from inanimate stones hewn out of the rock, it is the building up of a "spiritual edifice" made of "living stones."<sup>3</sup> It is the putting together, under the influence of divine grace, of all those human affections which, like the stones of the

<sup>1</sup> St Thomas, *Suppl.* q. xiii, art 1; *cf.* Prop. 59 of Baius, condemned by St Pius V: Denzinger, 1059.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii 4.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. ii 5.

sanctuary, had been "scattered in the very top of every street."<sup>1</sup>

Now just as the co-operation of man is needed for the sacraments to produce their effects in adult subjects, so the same co-operation is needed on our part for the satisfaction of Christ to produce its effect in us. This is in no wise derogatory to our Saviour's work. "When we say that a branch bears fruit, this is no slight to the root of the tree; on the contrary, in saying it we take the latter's agency for granted, as whatever the branch bears, it produces only by virtue of the sap that it draws from the root. If we said that the branch bore fruit by itself alone, then indeed we should be slighting the power of the root."<sup>2</sup>

The passion of Jesus Christ is too precious a thing to be indiscriminately applied to every man worthy or unworthy, righteous or unrighteous. There must be some mark to distinguish those worthy of it from the profane who are excluded from it. Thus the blood of the lamb marked the Hebrews' dwellings, so that the destroying angel might spare the children of Israel while putting to death the first-born of the Egyptians.

Evidence, however, compelled the reformers to acknowledge, up to a certain point, the necessity for some kind of satisfaction. What they did was to alter its character and nature. They preferred to look upon satisfaction as a remedy only—a wholesome preservative against future failings, without any value, however, as expiation for past offences.

We gladly admit the medicinal and preventive character of satisfaction, and it is quite true to say that "punishments are remedies";<sup>3</sup> but we cannot allow that the value of satisfaction is limited to this use.

<sup>1</sup> Lam. iv 1.

<sup>2</sup> J. M. Cappella, O.S.M., *De Satisf. J.C.*, Ferrariae, 1551, f. 54.

<sup>3</sup> (Κολάσεις) ἰατρεῖαι τινές εἰσιν. Arist. *Ethic.* lib. II, c. 3.

Sin, as we have said, is an act of flagrant injustice towards God, destroying the friendly relations which should exist between man and his Maker. These relations can be restored only by complying with the demands of a rigorous justice which requires that a double effect should be produced: that the past should be changed, and that the future should be provided for. Now it is the work of satisfaction to avenge upon the sinner the offended majesty of God. Satisfaction, then, is a part of punitive justice by which the offender either voluntarily inflicts chastisement on himself or freely submits to that imposed on him by the judge. Sin, by abolishing man's attitude of submission towards God, breaks the bond of love that should unite the creature and the Creator to each other; satisfaction re-establishes the equality demanded by justice and so unites these severed bonds.

Keeping in mind these two essential elements of expiatory deeds—*i.e.* reparation for the past insult and preservation from future offences—we may now proceed to define human satisfaction, in so far as it is distinct from that of Christ. It is “a disposition of our souls to pay our debt to the justice of God, to repair the offence that we have committed against him, and to check the causes of this offence, by voluntarily undergoing certain chastisements or by submitting to those he may inflict, and all this with a view to obtaining peace and reconciliation with him.”<sup>1</sup>

4. Satisfaction is one part of penance; penance, on the other hand, is at once a sacrament and a particular virtue. As a virtue, penance has existed ever since the fall of man; as a sacrament, it was instituted by our Lord.

From the moment that our first parents offended

<sup>1</sup> St Thomas, *Suppl.* q. xii, art. 1-3; *Catech. Rom.* Part II, c. v, nn. 63, 64.

God, there was no hope of pardon for them except through means of penance. But when the Son of God came "to renew all things,"<sup>1</sup> when he established for the regeneration of man those seven sacraments which are so many channels of divine grace, one of the seven was appointed for his restoration to the friendship of God if he should ever have cut himself off from the source of life after Baptism. Baptism was to be the first plank offered to man whereon he might escape the universal shipwreck caused by Adam; and in the event of letting this go and losing his baptismal innocence, the goodness of his Maker provided, in the form of penance, a second plank of salvation after shipwreck, *secunda post naufragium tabula*, according to the expression used by the Fathers.<sup>2</sup>

In instituting this sacrament, however, Christ did not destroy the virtue of penance. On the contrary, he formed its elements out of this very virtue. Just as he made the "matter" of the sacrament of Baptism out of water and that of the Eucharist out of bread and wine, so of the acts of the virtue of penance he made the "matter" of this sacrament of reconciliation. These acts are three in number: contrition, confession, and satisfaction. By these three acts man thoroughly fulfils those requirements of justice referred to above. By contrition he freely submits again to the will of God which he had opposed, by confession he acknowledges his past sins, and by satisfaction expiates them.

"Penance," says St John Chrysostom, "disposes the sinner to suffer everything willingly; it inspires his heart with contrition, it brings forth from his lips the acknowledgement of his fault; and it imparts to

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i 10.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. S. Hieron. In *Isai.* c. iii, super illud (vers. 3) "Ruit Jerusalem." Venetiis, 1767, t. iv, pag. 56.



his words real humility and wholesome satisfaction.”<sup>1</sup> By this virtue, in short, the sinner uses the only available means of making a truly just and acceptable reparation to his God; he shows an efficacious will to expiate his misdeeds, confesses his faults to God and his minister, and submits to a punishment proportionate to the offence.<sup>2</sup>

Of these three parts of penance contrition is undoubtedly the most important, being as it is the source and foundation of the other two, which it implicitly contains. Indeed, if a man, remembering his sins, is filled with such intense sorrow that his will is totally changed, being quite overpowered, crushed, and, so to speak, ground to pieces by grief<sup>3</sup>—and this precisely because his sins have offended the goodness of God—that man is justified even before receiving the sacrament, because such “perfect” contrition includes the will both to confess and to make satisfaction when opportunity offers. Hence, when he actually receives the sacrament, the effect of the priest’s absolution is not to efface his sins, but to give him fresh grace for resisting temptations and doing good.

5. This close blending of the two necessary elements of true contrition—regret for the past and a firm purpose of amendment for the future—is admirably set forth by the Council of Trent: “Contrition,” it says, “is a sorrow of the soul and a hatred of sin committed, accompanied by a firm purpose not to sin again.”<sup>4</sup> The first of these two elements is the chief one; but the second is a necessary consequence of it, for it is impossible to be truly repentant for one’s sin whilst the heart cherishes a secret desire to commit it again.

<sup>1</sup> *Serm.* I, De poenit.

<sup>2</sup> *Catech. Rom.* Part II, c. v, n. 23.

<sup>3</sup> St Thomas, *Suppl.* q. i, art. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Sess. XIV, c. iv.

The idea of penance, then, is an idea of bitter sorrow and regret; and it is as such that Holy Scripture treats it. "Now, therefore, saith the Lord: be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God."<sup>1</sup> "Against thee only have I sinned, and have done evil in thy sight," said David in the bitterness of his repentance.<sup>2</sup> King Ezechias "humbled himself because his heart had been lifted up."<sup>3</sup> King Manasses "did penance exceedingly before the God of his Fathers";<sup>4</sup> and after the preaching of Jonas the inhabitants of Nineveh "proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least. And the word came to the King of Nineveh: and he rose up out of his throne, and cast away his robe from him, and was clothed with sackcloth and sat in ashes, and neither men nor beasts, oxen nor sheep, tasted anything."<sup>5</sup> So, again, under the New Law, St Peter, St Paul, St Mary Magdalen, Zacheus, the Prodigal Son, and so many others acknowledged the great law of repentance and penance by their actions.

The great doctor of Milan, St Ambrose, speaks well on this subject. "It is easier," he writes, "to find people who have kept their innocence, than sinners who have done worthy penance. Is that penance worthy of the name, which sacrifices neither the seeking after dignities, nor the pleasures of the table, nor gratification of the senses? The true penitent should renounce the world: he should cut off something from the repose demanded by nature; drive away sleep by his groanings; interrupt it with his sighs; give up its time to prayer. He should live as though dying to the use of this life. Let him utterly

<sup>1</sup> Joel ii 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. l 6.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Paral, xxxii 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* xxxiii 12.

<sup>5</sup> Jonas iii 5-7.

renounce himself and become entirely changed, as happened to that young man of whom the story tells. This youth, after having for long indulged in a guilty love, went far away from his home and only came back when he had completely mastered the disordinate feeling. One day the woman who had been the object of his former love met him, and was greatly surprised that he spoke not a word to her. Thinking that he had probably not recognised her, she went again on purpose to meet him, and addressed him herself. 'It is I!' she said. 'But it is no longer I,' replied the youth (*Sed ego non sum ego*)."<sup>1</sup>

We may conclude this part of the subject with Leo XIII's words in his Bull of Jubilee: "To speak truth, the most desirable, solid, efficacious, and sincere form of satisfaction consists in repenting of having sinned, imploring peace and pardon from God and making progress in virtue or taking up the practice of it again, if one has dropped it."<sup>2</sup>

6. When Luther was about to break with the Church of Rome, he undertook to dispute this doctrine. He subtracted from the meaning of penance and contrition everything that savours of grief, sadness or bitterness. He declared that we can have true contrition without all this, and that the best penance is a new life—*optima poenitentia nova vita*.<sup>3</sup> All the rest, he said, only serves to make men hypocrites and worse sinners. We must think more of loving justice than of hating sin and, further, we should have no

<sup>1</sup> Lib. II, De Poenit. c. x.

<sup>2</sup> Bull *Properante ad exitum*, May 11, 1899. The whole doctrine is so beautifully put into a nutshell by a short expression in a Latin "Prayer before Mass," printed in the Roman Missal, that it seems worth quoting here: "Poenitet me peccasse, cupio emendare quod feci."

<sup>3</sup> Prop. 7 of the forty-one propositions condemned by Leo X in his Bull *Exsurge Domine*, June 15, 1520; Denzinger, 747.

anxiety but for knowing how to act in future.<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Valla<sup>2</sup> and Erasmus,<sup>3</sup> each of whom, in his own way, was a precursor of the Reformation, pretended also, with great show of Greek and Hebrew learning, that regret for sin committed is not an essential part of penance. Later, Theodore of Beza adopted this view, and represented the contrary doctrine as the prejudice of illiterate minds.

These authors, whom Bellarmine calls "rather grammarians than theologians," evidently took the expression "penance" to mean rather love of goodness than hatred of sin and to involve no feeling of displeasure or bitterness. In this case there would be nothing difficult or painful in the accomplishment of penance. The word "poenitentia," as recurring oftentimes in Holy Scripture, would not mean any grief of the soul, but only a change of the will—a simple purpose for the future, *μετάνοια*<sup>4</sup>—a bare resolve, not a painful and laborious exercise. Such was the reasoning of the reformers when they undertook to root up, to pull down, to waste and to destroy, hoping that they would afterwards be able just as easily to build and to plant.<sup>5</sup>

Luther himself, however, as may be seen from his subsequent writings and especially from the articles formulated at Smalkald, soon found that he must give up a view that was so insecure and so clearly opposed to the law of nature. He ended by denying his own teaching on this point and recog-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the "Sermo de Poenitentia" of Luther, and the conclusions of his Propositions.

<sup>2</sup> Notes on Chap. vii of 2 Corinthians.

<sup>3</sup> Notes on Chap. iii of St Matthew.

<sup>4</sup> See Luther's letter to Johann Staupitz, Vicar-General of the Augustinians, written in 1518, and inserted in the first volume of his works printed at Wittenberg.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jer. i 10.

nising, with the Church, the use and necessity of penance for past sin.

7. Even though our remarks should be looked upon as "the censures of ill-meaning and discontented persons,"<sup>1</sup> we cannot refrain from suspecting that those Lutheran principles were the very same that guided the commission charged by James I, in 1604, with the revision of the Protestant Bible.

It is indeed a singular fact that, in the innumerable passages where the Vulgate employs the word "poenitentia," the English Protestant version never translates it by "penance," but always by "repentance"; and one has certainly a right to suspect that this constant modification is not purely accidental.

The Hebrew word "nahham," which the Vulgate renders by "poenitere," means, strictly speaking, a change of will accompanied by sorrow and displeasure for the past and a firm purpose of reparation—feelings which are manifested by outward marks of sighs and groanings. The Greek word μεταμέλεσθαι is used in the same sense. As to the word μετάνοια, which seems to have been the stronghold of Erasmus and his followers, Lactantius says that it undoubtedly means a recovery or amendment—"resipiscentiam." He adds, however, that only those truly amend who testify sorrow for their faults and impose punishment on themselves to expiate their errors.<sup>2</sup> Etymologically the word μετάνοια signifies a change of mind, but its use among Greek authors, sacred and profane, implies also sorrow for the past.<sup>3</sup>

The Italian Protestant translators also carefully

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the Introduction to the English Protestant Bible.

<sup>2</sup> *Divin. Inst.* lib. VI, c. xxiv: "Resipiscit, ac mentem suam quasi ab insania recipit, quem errati piget, castigatque seipsum dementiae."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Liddell and Scott, *s.v.*, μεταμέλομαι, μετανοέω; Galtier, *De Poenitentia*, § 10.



avoid the word "penitenza" (penance), implying the idea of grief and chastisement, using almost exclusively the words "ravvedimento" (amendment) or "pentimento" (repentance). This preference is very significant. It is true that nowadays these two last terms mean, by custom, nearly the same thing as penance; nevertheless, when they are contrasted with this latter word, the term "repentance" seems intended to be understood in the sense of a simple change of thought—of a fresh view of things, following the meaning adopted by Erasmus and excluding all unpleasant or bitter recollections and everything hard and painful implied in the idea of penance.

Now if repentance is not necessarily joined to expiation, either voluntarily undergone or inflicted by a superior authority, and if, on the other hand, penance includes, as accompanying conditions, laborious exertion and sharp pain, why do these translators, in the face of painful practices so often mentioned in Scripture, persist in employing the word "repentance" rather than "penance"?

One or two examples, from amongst numerous ones, will be enough to show our meaning. Where the Vulgate has, *Idcirco ipse me reprehendo, et ago poenitentiam in favilla et cinere*, the Protestant version translates, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."<sup>1</sup> Now we may observe that if dust and ashes were, with the Hebrews, the ordinary accompaniment and usual signs of grief, and if, on the other hand, "repentance" or "amendment" means merely a fresh way of looking at things, is it not more natural to say, with the Catholic version: "Therefore I reprehend myself and do penance in dust and ashes"?

Again, the passage in Jeremias which in the Vulgate reads, *Postquam enim convertisti me, egi poenitentiam*,

<sup>1</sup> Job xlii 6.

is well rendered in the Catholic translation, "For after thou didst convert me, I did penance";<sup>1</sup> for it is natural that penance for the past should follow conversion, and he who truly repents cries out, looking upon the evil he has done: Would to God that I had not done it! But to render this, as the Protestant version does: "Surely after that I was turned (*i.e.*, converted), I repented," implies a contradiction.<sup>2</sup>

If sin were nothing more than the material fact of an action offensive to God, there would be no need to trouble further about it: such an act, once committed, would pass and cease to exist. But who would dare to say that any offence is merely a passing action? And who would count an offender as ceasing to be one the moment his offence was over, without any reference to the past? No, the act passes but its effect remains.

This being so, true reconciliation between the offender and the offended is possible only when the promise of future good behaviour is accompanied by some exterior mark of regret for the past: so declare nature and God alike. No man will readmit one who has sinned against true friendship without some kind of reparation of his offence as well as an assurance of amendment; and God acts in the same way.

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxxi 19.

<sup>2</sup> That penance regards the past no less than the future is abundantly proved by Tertullian, *Contra Marcion*. lib. II, and *De Poenitentia*. See also Aristotle, *Ethic*. lib. III, c. i. In a little poem "De Occasione de Poenitentia," the celebrated Ausonius, master and friend of St Paulinus of Nola, represents *μετάνοια* as an avenging goddess:

"Sum dea, quae facti non factique exigo poenas:  
Nempe ut poeniteat, sic Metanoea vocor."

See also Bellarmine, *De Poenitentia*, lib. I, c. ii; as also the important notes on St Matthew iii 1, 2, in the Rheims New Testament, published by George Henry and Co., London. Cf. *Collationes Brugenses*, 1927, p. 282.

"My son," says Ecclesiasticus, "hast thou sinned? do so no more: but for thy former sins, pray that they may be forgiven thee."<sup>1</sup> On which St Augustine remarks: "If ceasing to sin were the same thing as being without sin, it would have been enough to say: My son, hast thou sinned, do so no more; but this is not enough since we see added: pray that thy former sins may be forgiven thee."<sup>2</sup>

8. The true notion of penance, then, is not that of joy and pleasure, but distinctly of grief and trouble. Now it may be that a sinner elicits an act of contrition sincere and intense enough to equal the malice of his sin. In this case he recovers the grace and friendship of God, obtaining, at the same time, full remission of the punishment due to him. Such a sinner will have paid his debt to God, not so much, certainly, by reason of the value attached to his contrition, as because God has chosen to accept it in virtue of Christ's satisfaction.<sup>3</sup>

If, however, the interior sorrow does not reach this degree of intensity, the guilt (*reatus culpae*) indeed is still effaced from the sinner's soul, in that the restored grace of God is incompatible with the former separation from him and with the stain of sin; but there remains none the less a certain debt to the justice of God which has to be discharged in the form either of temporal punishment or of works of penance; since "the penance must not be less than the offence," as St Cyprian remarks.<sup>4</sup>

We have clear examples of this truth in Holy Scripture. After his expulsion from the earthly paradise, Adam obtained forgiveness of his sins from God: he acknowledged his fault, expiated it

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. xxi 1.

<sup>2</sup> *De Nupt. et Concupisc.* lib. I, c. xxvi. Cf. St Thomas, *Summa Theol.* I-II, q. cxiii, art. 2, 3.

<sup>3</sup> St Thomas, *Suppl.* q. v, art. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Serm.* V, De Lapsis.

by tears of real contrition, and the divine Wisdom "brought him out of his sin."<sup>1</sup> Yet what a punishment this one sin—forgiven to him who had committed it—brought down on the whole human race! Human nature was robbed, even in its very origin, of divine grace and seriously injured in its faculties. The darkness of the intellect and the malice of the will; the revolt of the flesh, with infirmity of purpose; sickness, trouble, weariness, with the certainty of inevitable death; and—worst consequence of all—the possibility of subsequent falls which may bring man to the eternal fire of hell: all these miseries we owe to Adam's first offence.<sup>2</sup>

Again, when God, moved by the petition of Moses, pardoned the people of Israel for their sin of idolatry in the desert, he none the less threatened the culprits with a day of vengeance on which he would punish them.<sup>3</sup> When the Hebrews murmured in the desert, God threatened to exterminate them, and Moses interceded for them. Then the Lord said to him: "I have forgiven according to thy word. As I live: and the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. But yet all the men that have seen my majesty, and the signs that I have done in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now ten times, and have not obeyed my voice, shall not see the land for which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any one of them that hath detracted me behold it."<sup>4</sup> And Moses himself, in spite of his holiness, found that he was refused entrance into the promised land because of his mistrust of God.<sup>5</sup>

The story of David proves still more conclusively that a temporal penalty remains due to the justice of

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. x 2. Cf. St Thomas, *Epist. ad Rom.* c. v, lect. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. St Thomas, *Summa Theol.* I-II, q. lxxxv and lxxxvii.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xxxiii 34.

<sup>4</sup> Num. xiv 20-23.

<sup>5</sup> Num. xx.

God, even after the forgiveness of a sin. By the mouth of his prophet Nathan, God himself had announced to the repentant king that his sin was pardoned;<sup>1</sup> nevertheless David had to endure a heavy punishment. The prophet foretold that his son would die shortly, an event which actually happened.<sup>2</sup> Yet, even so, the king did not hold himself dispensed from doing severe penance. He fasted, wore a hair-shirt, groaning continually, watering his nightly couch with tears and moistening the place of his rest.<sup>3</sup> Further, he entreated God to wash him yet more from his iniquity, and to cleanse him from his sin.<sup>4</sup> All this made St Augustine say: "Thou leavest not unchastised, O Lord, the sins even of those whom thou hast pardoned."<sup>5</sup> And St Gregory further adds: "After having confessed his fault, David deserved to hear those words, 'The Lord hath taken away thy sin.' And yet it was only after many sufferings and much anguish that he finally expiated his fault."<sup>6</sup>

In the face of such obvious facts as these, Luther still maintained that the whole penalty of sin is always remitted with its guilt. Calvin could not deny that the Church had held precisely the contrary for ages past; he persisted, however, in declaring that nearly every author whose writings we possess has erred upon this point and has used excessively severe language.<sup>7</sup> The Council of Trent set forth the true Catholic teaching on the subject, when it pronounced the doctrine that "remission of guilt is always accompanied by remission of penalty" to be absolutely erroneous and contrary to the word of God.<sup>8</sup>

However, divine grace, by the very act of justi-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xii 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 14, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. vi 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 1 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Enarrat. in Ps.* 1, n. 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Moral.* ix 27.

<sup>7</sup> *Instit.* lib. iii, c. iv, n. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Sess. XIV, c. viii; cf. can. 12, 15. See also Sess. VI, c. xiv, can. 30.



fying the sinner, works a wonderful transformation in the penalty itself. Human nature under the influence of grace returns to God; the sinner is resolved either himself to undertake the required expiation or to accept patiently whatever penalty God may send. Hence without losing the character of punishment, the penalty becomes satisfactory and even sweet to the sufferer. Contact with grace has transformed the base metal into pure gold.

But why, after all, take so much trouble to prove a truth that lies at the foundation of all social intercourse? Natural law itself, which regulates the relation of man to man, demands that an offender shall be reconciled to his injured neighbour only upon his offering adequate reparation for his offence. It stands to reason, then, that man is bound to give his Maker, besides sorrow of heart, some compensation for his sin, proportionate as far as possible to the insult he has thereby offered to the divine Majesty.

On the other hand, each time we do a good work in a state of grace, this results—apart from the power of intercession attached to our prayers—in a double advantage. First, such works increase our essential merit, and consequently our right to eternal glory. This it is that differentiates degrees of sanctity on earth, and eventually degrees of glory in the life to come, where “star differeth from star in glory.”<sup>1</sup>

But our good works possess yet another virtue—that of satisfaction, thanks to which we can pay the temporal debt of our sins. For each one of them presupposes a certain amount of labour and difficulty and consequently of sacrifice; and when they are done for the love of God, then God accepts them by way of compensation for sin.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv 41.

<sup>2</sup> Hence St Pius V condemned the following (59th) proposition of Michael Baius: “Quando per eleemosynas aliaque poeni-



The merit of the work belongs properly and exclusively to its author. It is inalienable because on this merit depends the reward of each deed, whence St Paul says: "And every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."<sup>1</sup> But the satisfaction may be transferred; wherein lies the difference between this and the two other acts of penance, contrition, and confession, which cannot be transferred to our neighbour's profit. "Nobody," says the Catechism of the Council of Trent,<sup>2</sup> "can have contrition or make confession for another; but those who are in the grace of God can pay off in another's name the debts owing by that person to God; and thus, in a certain way, we are able to bear one another's burdens."<sup>3</sup>

It is easy to understand why satisfaction can be transferred, but not contrition or confession. Contrition is a purely interior act, which consists in a disposition of the will hating sin, in order to return to God. Confession likewise, though expressed by words, is nothing but the outward sign of an interior act by which the sinner submits to the power of the keys. Satisfaction, on the other hand, consists of an external act and is a reparation that we offer to the divine Majesty for our offence. Hence for making such reparation we may have recourse to useful intermediaries, whom we naturally find in our friends and relations.

There is no need, for the carrying out of this

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tentiae opera Deo satisfacimus pro poenis temporalibus, non dignum pretium Deo pro peccatis nostris offerimus, sicut quidam errantes autumant, nam alioquin essemus, saltem aliqua ex parte, redemptores; sed aliquid facimus cujus intuitu Christi satisfactio nobis applicatur et communicatur." Denzinger, 1059.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii 8.

<sup>2</sup> Part II, c. v, n. 76. See also Prop. 60 of Baius, condemned by St Pius V. Denzinger, 1060.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. vi 2.

vicarious satisfaction, that the real debtor should be unable to pay what he owes: the only thing required is that the debt itself should be fully paid and in such a way as amply to satisfy justice. This principle explains what we hear of in the lives of certain saints who would sometimes, when administering the sacrament of Penance, give but slight penances for grave sins, promising to supply themselves what was wanting by their own mortifications.

It must be carefully noted, however, that no act of satisfaction, as a remedy, can be vicarious; for, as St Thomas remarks, "My flesh is not subdued by my brother's fasts."<sup>1</sup> Hence nobody must be allowed to perform another's penance in his place except in so far as the satisfaction is intended to be an expiation, and not remedially. With the latter object, penance must be done by the sinner himself.<sup>2</sup>

The possibility of transferring our satisfaction to others is incontestable. It is a natural consequence of the article of the Creed by which we profess to believe in the Communion of Saints. "Regenerated in Christ by the waters of the same baptism, sharing in the same sacraments, and above all strengthened by the same meat and drink, namely the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are all necessarily members of one and the same body. As then the foot does not perform its office for itself alone, but for the good of the eyes, and as the eyes in their turn see for the common benefit of all the limbs, so must works of satisfaction be held as the common property of all Christians."<sup>3</sup>

9. As to the application of our works of satisfaction, three cases may arise. First, the satisfaction we offer

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theol.* Suppl. q. xiii, a. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. L. Richard, "Sens Théologique du mot Satisfaction," *Rev. Sc. Rel.*, 1927, p. 87-93.

<sup>3</sup> *Catech. Rom.* Part II, c. v, n. 76.

may not be enough to pay our own debt of which there consequently remains a portion still due to the justice of God. This, it may be feared, is the case with numerous Christians. The sins committed are many: the good works done are few and imperfect, hence not fully satisfactory.

Next, certain good works may of themselves cover all our debt. Such, for instance, is baptism which ecclesiastical authors rightly describe as a "remission," "a washing from sin"<sup>1</sup> and an "indulgence."<sup>2</sup> Such, again, religious profession is accounted by ascetic writers, being so agreeable to God that he will regard it as a second baptism. Such, lastly, is martyrdom, which, inspired by the pure love of God, frees man from all obligations of penance.<sup>3</sup> In none of these cases is there necessarily a question of superabundant satisfaction.

But we may, in the third place, suppose the case of a Christian who has never lost his baptismal innocence and who, like St Paul the hermit, has spent a long life in the greatest austerity. What a treasure of satisfactory merits must he have amassed after expiating the few omissions and imperfections inherent in human frailty!

St John Climacus speaks of some holy anchorites he had seen in a monastery called the "Prison of Penitents." Some of these remained standing in the

<sup>1</sup> S. Greg. Nyss., *Oratio in Christ. Bapt.*; S. August., *de Bapt.* v, 21. In another passage (Lib. I, c. 2, Ep. Pelag. c. xiii, n. 26), the holy Doctor of Hippo explains, with his usual acumen, how baptism confers a perfect "indulgence" of former sins—that is, their total destruction. He adds that this sacrament has not merely the effect of cutting them off whilst leaving their roots, as a certain Julian, a disciple of Pelagius, pretended when he said: "Ut omnium peccatorum radices in mala carne teneantur quasi rasorum in capite capillorum, unde crescant iterum rescanda peccata."

<sup>2</sup> Concil. Carthag., ap. S. Cyprian, n. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Irish Eccles. Record* XVIII, p. 384.

open air to conquer sleep, others kept their eyes immovably turned up to heaven, begging God with abundant tears to have mercy on them. Others, again, with hands tied behind their backs, had their faces bent constantly towards the ground, counting themselves unworthy to look upwards, or seated on cinders lowered their heads between their knees and beat the ground with their foreheads; whilst some, like St Simeon Stylites, remained for long years on a column exposed to all temperatures as voluntary victims for sins they themselves had never committed.

Times nearer to our own, also, are not wanting in like examples of austere penance. St Alexis Falconieri, one of the Seven Founders of the Servite Order, had spent thirty-three years of his life in spotless purity and the practice of exalted virtues, when, obeying a miraculous call from the Blessed Virgin, he went with his six companions into absolute retirement and embraced the religious state. In this he lived seventy-seven years, and the chroniclers testify that he spent the whole of that time in prayer, fasting and performing the hardest penances and acts of the most disinterested charity. What superabundant satisfactions were accumulated in the course of such a long life!

These holy men were like those of whom St Paul speaks: "And others had trials of mockeries and stripes, moreover also of bands and prisons. They were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted."<sup>1</sup> Yet they could say with the same apostle: "I am not conscious to myself of anything,"<sup>2</sup> and again: "For our glory is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity of heart

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi 36, 37.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iv 4.

and sincerity of God and not in carnal wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conversed in this world.”<sup>1</sup>

Might not all those alike have said with Job: “O that my sins, whereby I have deserved wrath, and the calamity that I suffer, were weighed in a balance. As the sand of the sea, this [the calamity] would appear heavier.”<sup>2</sup>

But to go still further, what can be said of the overflowing satisfactions of the Mother of God? Faith tells us that she was conceived in “original justice” and never experienced that inclination to sin which causes our sharpest struggles and our most frequent falls. Hence, according to the Council of Trent, she never committed the slightest imperfection that could dim the light of grace in her soul.<sup>3</sup> Yet what trials that Mother of Sorrows had to bear throughout her life, and what a perfect agony of suffering she endured when she “stood by that cross whence hung her Son”! What abundant merits and satisfactions must she not have amassed by the time Jesus called her to be crowned in heaven? What other queen ever brought her spouse so rich a dowry?

10. There has been, however, one who endured more labours and torments than the Queen of Martyrs. It was Jesus who was made “a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with infirmity,” and who “hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows” to such a degree that we have “thought him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.”<sup>4</sup> And yet this one was essential holiness and purity, “the holy one of God,”<sup>5</sup> “who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth”;<sup>6</sup> the “high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily (as the other

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. i 12.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. liii 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Job vi 2, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Mark i 24.

<sup>3</sup> Sess. VI, c. xxiii.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. ii 22.



priests) to offer sacrifices first for his own sins and then for the people's."<sup>1</sup> What a treasure of satisfactions—infinite satisfactions since he was truly God—did he who suffered these torments heap up for us !

And now what have the superabundant satisfactions of Jesus Christ himself and those of his holy Mother and all the saints availed ? Should we dare to say that they have been of no practical use, have had no real effect, have served only to show how much Christ and his saints could suffer when subjected to the extremity of pain ? Such a belief would be utterly inconsistent with our own conception both of the wisdom of God and of his infinite justice.

For would it not in the first place be contrary to our notion of the divine wisdom, to suppose that almighty God, in subjecting his well-beloved Son, and after him his saints, to such torments, had no object in view but to give the world a barren spectacle of patience and courage ? It would surely be putting our Maker on a level with the Roman emperors delighting in gladiator fights, or even with the Pagan gods looking down with pleasure from Olympus on the labours of Hercules.

And, in the next place, to say that all these merits are destitute of practical application would be quite contrary to our idea of God's justice. For we are fully convinced that this justice will never allow any merit or good work whatsoever to fail in producing a beneficial result, either for ourselves or for those whose interests we have at heart.

But the satisfactions in question would be destitute of practical application if the use of them were not open to all. Just as the enormous treasure of an eastern potentate, for instance, might arouse a miser's envy and admiration but would be perfectly useless to the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vii 26, 27.



world whilst shut up under lock and key; even so we may say that the supererogatory satisfactions of our Saviour and the saints would remain completely barren if they could not be drawn forth from the treasure-house of the Church and employed for the general service of Christianity, or used to supplement the poverty of Christ's most needy members.<sup>1</sup>

From all this it appears that there must exist a treasure of superabundant satisfactions in the Church, out of which it must be possible to draw what may be necessary to cover a man's spiritual debt. However, vicarious reparation is not limited to this case of superabundant satisfactions only. Indeed we may make over to others even those satisfactions which might be necessary for our own selves; but it is only in the case of satisfactions being drawn from the superabundant treasure of the Church<sup>2</sup> that an indulgence

<sup>1</sup> B. Albert the Great thus describes this treasure (IV Sent. dist. xx, art. 16): "Quia non potest remitti debite et discrete pro peccatis injunctum uni, nisi fiat recompensa per alterum qui plus debito facit, ideo subjungitur: ex thesauro supererogationis procedens. In hoc enim thesauro habet Ecclesia divitias meritorum et passionis Jesu Christi et gloriosae Virginis Mariae, omnium apostolorum et martyrum et sanctorum Dei vivorum et mortuorum." Cf. St Thomas in IV Sent. dist. xx, q. i, a. 3.

<sup>2</sup> The attack of Protestants on this treasure, which they called "an invention of the Medieval Scholastics," were reproduced at the pseudo-synod of Pistoja, and repeated in modern days in *Trattato Storico, Dogmatico, Critico delle Indulgenze*, published at Genoa in 1798 (fourth edition, § III, Epoca 3a, vol. i, p. 59). The teaching of this synod was condemned by Pius VI in the celebrated Constitution *Auctorem fidei*, prop. 39. Those attacks have been recently repeated by Mr. H. C. Lea, *Auricular Confession and Indulgences*, vol. iii., London, 1896, pp. 18 seq.

As we shall often have occasion in the course of the present work to refer to Mr. Lea's book, it is well we should here quote a passage from the little book of Father Casey, S.J., *Notes on a History of Auricular Confession* (Philadelphia, 1899, p. 5): "The author's (Mr. Lea's) array of reference at the foot of nearly every page invests his work with an appearance of scholarship that has passed with many as a convincing proof of his reliability. Indeed, his collection of references looks like a direct challenge

properly so called takes place, as will be shown in the next chapter.<sup>1</sup>

For the present we insist on the Catholic doctrine of vicarious satisfaction, whether the giver may have discharged all his debt or may still be liable to punishment, for it is on the fact of a transfer of satisfactions that the doctrine of indulgences is based.

II. The objections that might be raised against the possibility of a transfer of satisfaction are answered by that Article of the Creed to which we have already referred. The dogma of the Communion of Saints directs us to believe that there exists in the Church a bond which unites all Christians, establishes a community of interests among them and gives them a right to share in each other's goods. In short, the bond is that of a family where possessions acquired by each individual are used as common property.

The spiritual goods of the Church are interchanged by her members; their union is not merely that of mutual sympathy and edification, but includes the actual energising influence of one member upon another and of the whole body upon each member. For we know by Scripture that the Church is a living body

to his opponents. It is precisely here that we find the chief cause for complaint. For it is principally by means of references and quotations that Mr. Lea has succeeded in some quarters in passing himself off as an historian. His references, besides, are remarkably accurate, considering their multitude; and as far as titles and numbers are concerned they call for little censure. This of itself has deceived many. But the question is, what have we behind the references, titles and numbers?"

<sup>1</sup> The torments of the martyrs and the sufferings of the saints form part of this treasure, and serve to ransom our sins. This is the sense of the condemnation of Baius's 60th Proposition: "Per passiones sanctorum in indulgentiis communicatas non proprie redimuntur nostra delicta, sed per communicationem caritatis nobis eorum passiones impertiuntur, ut digni simus, qui pretio sanguinis Christi a poenis pro peccatis debitis liberemur." Denzinger, 1060. Cf. Galtier, *De Poenitentia*, § 580.

of which Christ is the Head, "from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in charity."<sup>1</sup>

Let us consider this saying of the Apostle. The substantial unity of a man's body requires that all the limbs should be so connected that they influence each other vitally, by means of the constant communication of invigorating blood; whence the growth and development of each limb depends on the growth and development of the whole body. Thus, in the Church, in virtue of the fellowship between the members that compose it and who are *called to be saints*,<sup>2</sup> the faithful must be closely joined in the unity of their faith and must help each other by the mutual communication of their goods, so that the final end of all shall be to produce the perfection of the saints and the "edifying of the body of Christ in charity."<sup>3</sup>

This close union—this mutual dependence—creates amongst the members a common responsibility, in virtue of which both the good and the evil done by one are in a certain sense imputed to the rest. This is why, more than once, entire communities have been saved because they contained just one holy soul, known to God alone, as in the case of Putiphar whose house received abundant blessings only for the sake of Joseph. How often, on the other hand, has not the

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv 12, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. i 7.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv 16. From what St Leo the Great and other ecclesiastical writers and theologians say about the saints being indebted to Christ, Mr. Lea (p. 15 of work cited) concludes that therefore they cannot be creditors; that is, that their supererogatory merits cannot be admitted. But this writer sees a contradiction where none exists; for the merits of the saints, however considerable these may be, do not hinder the saints themselves from being debtors to our Lord, as "all our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor. iii 5).

whole mystic body of Christ had to suffer cruel persecutions through faults committed only by certain perverse members, but for which all were to a certain degree jointly answerable!<sup>1</sup>

12. In a letter written to the abbot and monks of Chichester, Peter of Blois (who died about A.D. 1200) speaks of the communion of Saints in touching words. His object in writing was to entreat the monks to pray fervently for him, as he was about to be admitted to the dignity of priestly orders.

"In Christ," he says, "we are but one; and the unity of the Church established by the close connection of her members, imposes upon all the obligation of mutual communion and corporate charity. I entreat you, then, in the unity of the same faith, in the communion of Saints, in the confession of one only bap-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lea vainly affirms that the words *Sanctorum Communionem* are not found in the ancient creeds, from which he concludes that it is an article of faith recently invented in the Church (pp. 15 and 16). On this we would observe, in the first place, that the two words *Communionem Sanctorum* do not, properly speaking, constitute a distinct article of the creed, but belong to the article "the Holy Catholic Church," which is found in all creeds, ancient as well as modern. Further, it is obvious that "the Communion of Saints" is nothing but a fuller development of the article on the Church; for if we once admit that there exists in the Church unity of faith and participation in the same sacraments, how can we deny community of spiritual goods amongst its members? If, as some pretend, the Church embraced within her fold Christians of various creeds, of which each member were free to accept or reject any article whatever, then we might perhaps concede to Mr. Lea that isolation is the normal state of individuals in this spiritual economy. But if, in the Church's mystical body, there is but one Faith, one Baptism and one Head, how can we fail to see that such communion is a fundamental law of the constitution of that body? This is why (see St Ambrose, in Ps. cxviii, Serm. viii 75, 69) Jesus Christ taught us to say *Our Father*, not *My Father* (Matt. vi 11); and St Paul (Coloss. i 12) orders us to give thanks to God the Father, "who made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light." See *Catech. Rom.* Part I, c. x, nn. 23, seq. On the addition "The Communion of Saints," see *The Apostles' Creed*, by the Rt. Rev. A. Macdonald, London, 1925, p. 302.

tism, let the eyes of your charity look upon my imperfection,<sup>1</sup> and, by your prayers, help a weak man who fears the weight of office. In Jesus Christ we lose nothing by helping others; grace increases in proportion as we give and the crock of oil emptied by charity into the vessels brought to her for filling, overflows the more for what it pours out.<sup>2</sup> Hence your prayer never remains useless or barren, and should it not avail the one for whom you pray, it returns to the breast of him who uttered it.”<sup>3</sup>

13. We must remember, moreover, that this communion does not exist only within the limits of the Church Militant, but extends to the Church Suffering and the Church Triumphant.

Confirmed in happiness, the saints look down on their brethren here below, still exposed to the enemy's attacks and forced to struggle for their very lives; whilst the faithful on earth, in their turn, think with compassion of the holy souls in purgatory, which have come forth, indeed, victorious from the last fight, but have yet to pay their debt to God by cruel sufferings.

The saints in heaven are rich beyond their needs, and the superabundance of their merits makes up for our poverty. On the other hand, very many of the souls departed—though saved and in that respect in a better condition than our own souls—are kept prisoners and powerless in the purifying flames of purgatory; and we, imitating what Tobias did for his brethren in slavery, gladly hold ourselves bound to alleviate the pains of those who are suffering more than we, even though they be holier and assured of their salvation.

“What a grand picture is formed by this immense

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxviii 16.

<sup>2</sup> Allusion to 4 Kings iv.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. cxxxix.



city, with its three orders of spirits in constant intercourse! The struggling world offers one hand to the suffering world, and with the other lays hold of the triumphant world. Thanksgiving, prayer, satisfactions, help, inspirations, faith, hope, and love, flow around from one to the other like so many life-giving streams."<sup>1</sup>

14. This communion, however, cannot be fully enjoyed unless the members of the corporate society have learnt the meaning of suffering.

Of all the mysteries that surround the life of man not one is so vast and so difficult of practical solution as the mystery of pain.<sup>2</sup> It envelops the whole human race, the good equally with the bad, the poor equally with the rich. Each new generation experiences new miseries: neither time, place, condition nor dignity may exempt man from sorrow. It lays hold of him in the cradle, and follows him to the grave. No matter how long or how short a time any of us may have lived, we probably feel that, had we known at our birth the troubles that we were to suffer, we would have lost courage and cried out with Job, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said: A child is conceived!"<sup>3</sup>

Why, then, are we born to suffer? Why does trouble, in bodily or mental form, pursue us so constantly that it may be called the *refrain* of life?

Those who would see in this world matter only, say that pain is a tribute imposed either by nature or by the blind forces of fate. But nature can claim no authority for making man her tributary, and fate by itself is merely an empty word. The truth is that the

<sup>1</sup> J. de Maistre, *Soirées de St Pétersbourg*, vol. ii, 10<sup>me</sup> Entretien.

<sup>2</sup> See the excellent treatment of the problem of evil by B. V. Miller, *God the Creator*, 1927, p. 75. See also Card. Lepicier, tr. de *Opere sex dierum*, Quaest. vi, de Causa mali.

<sup>3</sup> Job iii 3.



hollow theories of self-styled philosophers have never yet succeeded in soothing a grief, healing a wound or comforting an afflicted heart.

And yet it was not God who first brought sorrow into the world. He is essential goodness and cannot be the direct cause of evil. Suffering is an evil and, as such, has been introduced by that which is essentially evil, that is by sin. It was sin that brought sorrow into the world and God, who allowed the sin, decreed that it should bring in its train the natural consequence, which is suffering.

Here, then, is the origin of suffering. But there is yet another mystery hidden in the nature of pain. What object had God in thus allowing sorrow to be brought upon us? what *raison d'être* is there for its existence? It restores the right order of things as regards the offence committed against divine Justice.<sup>1</sup> The sinner has refused God the submission due to him, he shall therefore expiate his disloyalty by bitter suffering. He has refused to serve God for love, he shall therefore be compelled to serve him by force, and God will remain supreme Master for ever.

But the explanation of the mystery does not stop here. The angels sinned and suffered; in their case divine justice was satisfied and all was done. Man also sins, suffers and satisfies divine justice; but he does more: by suffering he draws upon himself from heaven graces by which he may be restored to his former condition. In the case of demons suffering had no object but the pure and simple satisfaction of justice, but in man it has a double end. It is a payment to the *justice* of God, and also a means of winning his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bossuet in his *Meditations*, "Sermon on the Mount," Eleventh Day: "To sin is disorder, but to be punished when we sin is order: therefore you return by means of the penalty to the state of order that you had quitted by your fault."

mercy. For the rebellious angels God's "Justice is justice for ever";<sup>1</sup> for man "Mercy and Truth have met each other: Justice and Peace have kissed."<sup>2</sup>

The application of this law is universal. There is no expiation for the sin of man but by suffering, and there is no ground for an appeal to mercy but through sorrow. Therefore it was that "Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth,"<sup>3</sup> would not exempt himself from this law. "And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things."<sup>4</sup>

There is one more thing in this mystery of pain, and that is the *proportion* between the suffering and the restoration of order. The greater the suffering the more complete the restoration. Hence "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and justice and sanctification and redemption,"<sup>5</sup> had also to be the "Man of Sorrows."<sup>6</sup>

Of all creatures the one most intimately associated with our Lord in his Redeemer's office of appeasing the divine justice and drawing down mercy on earth was the Blessed Virgin Mary, just because she was destined to suffer in so high a degree. As Jesus, by his Passion, made satisfaction for our sins, so Mary, by her compassion, co-operated with him towards the same end. As the humanity of Jesus was the most marvellously beautiful work of mercy—"We saw his glory full of grace and truth,"<sup>7</sup>—so Mary was the most pure and lovely of all creatures—also "full of grace" in her own state,<sup>8</sup> and this because she suffered, not, of course, so much as her Son, but more than any other creature.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxviii 142.

<sup>4</sup> Mark viii 31.

<sup>7</sup> John i 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxxiv 11.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. i 30.

<sup>8</sup> Luke i 28.

<sup>3</sup> Apoc. i 5.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. liii 3.

This relation of both our Lord and his Mother towards suffering must be traceable in the life of every Christian, since "those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with all its vices and concupiscences."<sup>1</sup> Still, there is this difference between them and us: Jesus and Mary had not to expiate their own sins by suffering; both, though from quite different causes, were exempt from sin. Nevertheless, what they endured won very special rewards for them: Jesus "entered into his glory" through suffering;<sup>2</sup> and Mary was made Queen of Angels because she had been Queen of Martyrs.

Such, then, is the double object of suffering: to offer due reparation to our Maker, and to call down the dew of his mercy on earth; the final end of both being the destruction of sin and the glory of God.

The Almighty, in allowing—nay even exacting—pain and sorrow, works like the skilful artist whose picture, from one point of view, may appear to be made up of detached strokes or dashes; but which is seen, when looked at from the right distance and position, to form one beautiful, harmonious whole. Reason sees the mystery of suffering only through a thick veil or, as it were, by twilight. Faith throws a flood of pure light on it—the dawn of a perfect day: "In the evening weeping shall have place, and in the morning gladness."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v 24.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiv 26.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxix 6.

## CHAPTER II

### MERCY AND PARDON

#### *The True Notion of Indulgence*

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ.”—Gal. vi 2.

Satisfactions can be transferred in three ways—The first way—The second way—The Church a body politic—The third way—Legitimate authority—Just motive for granting—Teaching that follows from these two conditions—Capability in the penitent—Requisite intention—Performance of the works—Indulgences profitable even to those who grant them—Opinions of theologians on the worth of indulgences—The key of order and the key of jurisdiction—Motive for conceding indulgences—They are worth just what the concession states—Various kinds of indulgence—What an indulgence is not—Meaning of the word “indulgence” in Scripture—Origin of the expression in the Church.

**A**N indulgence may be defined as the remission before God of the penalty due to sin already forgiven, which ecclesiastical authority grants out of the treasury of the Church, to the living by way of absolution, to the dead by way of suffrage.<sup>1</sup> The full meaning of this definition, taken from the Code, will now be explained. When we wilfully offend God, we contract a real debt to his justice and we deserve a penalty which contrition and absolution do not always enable us to pay entirely. On the other

<sup>1</sup> “Remissio coram Deo poenae temporalis debitae pro peccatis, ad culpam quod attinet jam deletis, quam ecclesiastica auctoritas ex thesauro Ecclesiae concedit pro vivis per modum absolutionis, pro defunctis per modum suffragii” (*Cod. Jur. Can.* 911).

hand Christ and his saints have acquired, by their superabundant sufferings, a treasure of satisfactory merits, and these, thanks to the communion of saints, can be transferred from one person to another.<sup>1</sup>

Now, taking these principles—based on faith—for our point of departure, we may proceed to examine how this transference and donation of satisfactory merits can take place in the Church.

First, this transference may be made by any individual member of the Church whatsoever. Secondly, it may be made by any small community of the faithful bound to one another by a tie of the same religious profession or of a common life, such as the members of a religious order, or persons of the same parish. Thirdly, the satisfactions transferred may be drawn direct from the treasure of the Church herself by those who are the authorised dispensers of them. We propose to study each of these three separate possibilities, and to see which of them deserves the name of “Indulgence.”

<sup>1</sup> It will be of use here to point out how mistaken are the ideas current among Protestants as to these points of Catholic doctrine. It is enough to quote Mr. Lea’s words: “The whole theory of the Communion of Saints and the transfer of merits is incompatible with the predestinarian doctrines and denial of free will formulated by the Second Council of Orange.” There are no less than three distinct errors in this short phrase. First, it is not properly speaking the merits that are transferred, but only the satisfactions (as shown above). Secondly, the Council of Orange did not in the slightest degree attack man’s free will; it merely aimed at stating, in opposition to the semi-Pelagians, the nature of grace and its necessity in the supernatural order. Thirdly, the dogma of predestination is in no wise incompatible with the Communion of Saints and with indulgences. It is possible for any man, at present perfectly free from guilt and from any liability to punishment, to fall into sin and lose his soul. On the other hand, men who were plunged in a very abyss of sin have been known to receive so powerful a grace as to don their baptismal robe anew. On the “Communion of Saints” see *Forschungen zur Christlichen Litteratur und Dogmengeschichte*, by Dr. J. P. Kirsch, vol. i. Freiburg, 1900. R. S. Bour in *Dict. Théol.* III, col. 429, p. 39.



2. It is certain then, first, that one person can transfer his own satisfactions to another; they are his own patrimony of which he may dispose at will.<sup>1</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, the "Father of Ecclesiastical History," tells us how St John the Apostle brought into Christ's fold a robber, whose life had been one long catalogue of crimes, and, when the poor man despaired of obtaining mercy from God, how the saint encouraged him by saying: "Fear not, my son; thou mayest yet hope for salvation: *I will satisfy Jesus Christ for thee*, I will gladly undergo death for love of thee, as the Lord endured it for us. I will give my soul in the place of thine."<sup>2</sup>

Thus did St John pass on the satisfactions gained by himself to that poor sinner.

The martyrs did in like manner. From the depth of their prisons, which they were on the point of leaving to give their lives for Christ, they often made a solemn deposition (of course at that time lacking the official sanction of the Church) by which they transferred to any Christian, who should humbly recommend himself to their prayers, the satisfaction of their present and future torments. This satisfaction was to take the place of the penances which the suppliant would have had to perform according to the discipline of the Church. To this fact we shall have to revert later on.

We find a very similar thing in the lives of those servants of God who have specially devoted themselves to the conversion of sinners in the sacrament of Penance, like St Raymond of Pennafort, St Philip Neri or St Alphonsus Liguori. They used at times to impose very light penances on great sinners, and supply by

<sup>1</sup> St Thomas, *Summa Theol.* Suppl., q. xiv, a. 2. See above, c. i, n. 8, p. 24. See also J. Ventura. "Notes pour une Conférence sur les Indulgences." *Conférences Inédites* IV, p. 378. Paris, 1864.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. Eccl.* III, 23



their own mortifications for what was wanting in the satisfaction of the penitents.

St Francis Xavier also affords a striking example of this kind of vicarious satisfaction. He was accustomed to scourge himself pitilessly for the expiation, as far as lay in his power, of the sins that had been confessed to him. We read again that St Catherine of Siena obtained from God the immediate entrance of her father's soul into heaven, on condition that she herself should bear his whole purgatorial chastisement. She actually never ceased for the rest of her life suffering a sharp pain in her side.<sup>1</sup>

Still, this kind of transfer made by an isolated member of the Church and destitute of official sanction on the part of legitimate authorities, is not what we call an "indulgence." An indulgence is drawn from that treasure of the Church which consists, as we have seen, of the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints, whereas the appropriation spoken of here is made from the spiritual riches of a private individual.

Moreover, the administering of a treasure implies authority. Consequently an indulgence can only be granted by those who have received power in the Church from Christ, for which reason also the sacrifice of personal satisfactions made by an isolated person on his own authority cannot constitute an indulgence.

Further it may possibly happen that the merits of a generous soul, no matter how great, are not enough to pay the debt of a sinner entirely, whilst the treasure of the Church whence indulgences are drawn is more than sufficient to pay the debt for sins of innumerable worlds.

<sup>1</sup> *Vita*, auctore Fr. Raymundo Cap., II, c. ii, nn. 220-223, ap. Bolland. April. 30.

Lastly, an indulgence acquits the Christian of his debt in respect of both God and the Church, but the private offering of personal satisfaction, howsoever abundant, could not, unless sanctioned by the Church, free a man from his obligation of performing the canonical penance incurred by his sins according to the ancient discipline, were such discipline still in force.

Hence we infer that the transfer of satisfactions made by a private member of the Church is no indulgence in the proper meaning of the word.

3. The second mode of transferring satisfactory merits takes place when a certain number of the faithful agree, either among themselves or through their immediate superior, to give a share in their satisfactory acts to a certain person. For example, a group of pious people may arrange together that they will offer some special penitential practices for an individual's benefit; or again, the superior of any community, *e.g.*, of a religious order or a particular parish, may apply the merits of his subordinates to such an object. Instances of this second kind of application abound. They are especially frequent in religious orders, where the superiors often grant to noted benefactors, in recognition of their liberality, "certificates" of participation in all good works of their subjects.

Yet this kind of transfer or donation is no more an "indulgence" than the first kind, not being drawn from the treasure of the Church and, like the first, being destitute of official sanction, being possibly inadequate to the sinner's debt, and certainly not acquitting the obligation of canonical penance.

This statement may give rise to the following objection: "Is not a religious superior or the rector of a parish a person invested with ecclesiastical

authority? Does he not occupy a place in the Church's hierarchy? and has he not true jurisdiction over those who are his spiritual subjects? And, if so, how can it be said that a concession made by him is not ratified by the Church?"

To answer such an objection we must understand exactly how the Church is constituted.

4. Speaking generally, groups or associations of people are of two kinds—the one called bodies *economic* or domestic; the other, bodies *politic* or civil.

An assemblage of individuals bound together by ties of blood, as a family, or by mutual religious or commercial interests, as a religious order or an industrial guild, constitutes what is called an "economic association." But the grouping together of such assemblages, united by common interests and belonging to the same nationality, forms a "politic association," living under one government, and this is a State.

Now the Catholic Church is a "body politic"—a State. It is a society composed not merely of individuals but also of families, cities, provinces and nations, all united for the same end, all having the same interests, all obeying the same laws, and all governed by the one supreme pastor.

This indeed was the wish of Jesus Christ—that the Church should embrace all nations of the earth, for he said to his apostles: "Go ye forth and teach all nations."<sup>1</sup> Hence it is that the faithful are called "a holy nation, a purchased people . . . who in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God."<sup>2</sup>

If then the Church is a body politic, a State in the true sense of the word, her government is also a State government, and her treasure a State treasure. Consequently the care and administration of this treasure

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii 19.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. ii 9, 10.

belong to those only who, within the Church, are invested with politic or State power, who are qualified as public officials, who, in short, are properly speaking the prelates of the Church.

Now these prelates are the bishops, and the bishops only, for to them alone belongs the fullness of power for dispensing the sacraments. They alone possess native and complete jurisdiction for administering ecclesiastical justice. To them belongs by right the mission, under the "Prince of Pastors," to "feed the flock of God" of which they should be verily "a pattern."<sup>1</sup> They are the successors of the apostles, the brethren of the Sovereign Pontiff, the "ambassadors for Christ."<sup>2</sup> They have for their daily work "the solicitude for all the Churches,"<sup>3</sup> and have contracted with the Church and her interests a mystical union that binds them inseparably to Christ—a union of which they are reminded by the pastoral ring that adorns their hand.

But the inferior clergy, except when specially delegated, have no authority in the Church beyond their own parish or congregation. The faithful who are subject to them form only an "economic association." Even though these ecclesiastics may have sometimes a title, they are not properly prelates, that is to say pastors of the Church. In the administration of the sacraments their power is limited, because it comes to them from the bishops, whose zeal, vigilance and paternal care they must supply where the chief pastor himself is unable to act. For the bishop says to them at their ordination, "The more weak and infirm we are, the more we need such auxiliaries."<sup>4</sup>

When, therefore, the superior of a community or

<sup>1</sup> Pet. v 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xi 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Pontif. Rom.* Cf. St Thomas, *Suppl.*, q. xxvi, art. 1.

of a parish applies to a given individual the good works performed by his subjects, this is not a true indulgence, not only because such good works are of limited merit, but especially because this superior is not one of the chief pastors—not a prelate or “superior officer” of the Church. He has no authority over that treasure of the Church from which alone the debt of an infinite number of repentant sinners may be remitted.<sup>1</sup>

5. A genuine indulgence is granted only in the third of the cases cited—where the transfer of merits is made from the treasure of the Church and by her true prelates, as is clear from what has now been said. The reason of this is, first, that no private treasure of satisfaction can be equivalent to the sum total of the penalty to be remitted, whereas we know that the merits belonging to the whole Church can satisfy for all sins, and, secondly, that the chief pastors only have authority over the Church’s treasure.

Yet one more reason must be added. The grant made cannot be styled an indulgence, unless it be accepted by the Church as a compensation for the canonical penance to which the old penitential discipline condemned the sinner. This is because the latter, by his sin, has offended not only God, but the society of which he is a perverse member, and hence that whole society has a right to exact satisfaction from the offending member. Consequently this application of merits drawn from the public treasure is no real indulgence, unless it pays the sinner’s debt, not only to God, *in foro interno*, but to the Church,

<sup>1</sup> We here take the word prelate in the strict sense: *praelatus*, one who is above others not by rank only but by the jurisdiction or authority he exercises over his subjects. It is only through an extension of the term that Church dignitaries having no ordinary jurisdiction have been named prelates. Cf. *Cod. Jur. Can.* 328.



*in foro externo*; and in this *exterior* tribunal the chief pastors alone are the ordinary judges.

6. Now, before going further, we must see what are the exact conditions required to make indulgences valid. Theologians enumerate three—namely, first, *legitimate authority* in the person who grants them; secondly, a *just motive* for granting them; and, lastly, *suitable dispositions* in the person who profits by them. The first two of these requirements concern the superior who grants the indulgence, the third concerns the faithful who wish to gain it.

To understand the first of these conditions thoroughly, it is necessary to have a perfectly accurate idea of the principle of authority in the Catholic body. The Church possesses a *hierarchy of jurisdiction* which comes from Jesus Christ and is carried on in the persons of the various ministers who, from the Pope to the simple priest, represent the authority of her divine Founder.

This hierarchy is founded on the principle that he who sends communicates to the person sent an authority which qualifies the second to carry on the personality of the first, either entirely or in part, according to the degree and measure of the power communicated. Without this commission no one can have the power of binding and loosing; should he pretend to it, his words would be but empty sound and any concession he might offer pure illusion.

The first person invested with this authority by divine right is the sovereign Pontiff, he “who guards the keys, the successor of St Peter, the vicar of Jesus Christ, who possesses the power of the keys that opened heaven.”<sup>1</sup> The Pope is in the Church what a king is in his kingdom. His authority depends on no human being, but solely on Christ, from whom

<sup>1</sup> Leo X, Decree *Per praesentes*.

he holds it. He has therefore full power to bind or to loose, to forgive or retain sins, to remit or exact the punishment they deserve.

This doctrine is derived from Holy Scripture, from the teaching of the Fathers and the Councils and from the constant use made by the Popes of the power in question for nearly nineteen centuries.

After, or more truly with, the Pope, general Councils enjoy these rights, for they represent the universal Church with which Christ has promised to remain throughout all ages.

Bishops, again, can grant indulgences and also by divine right; for they are the heads of their flocks, not by the Church's institution, but of right divine. Hence they are invested with a jurisdiction to which is attached the conceding of indulgences.

However, the jurisdiction of bishops, as well as their power, is subordinate to that of the Pope, and this by the will of our Lord himself who entrusted to Peter the care of feeding not only his *lambs*, who are the lay body of the faithful, but also his sheep,<sup>1</sup> who are the pastors. "Bishops," says St Thomas, "are called upon to bear a portion of the Sovereign Pontiff's care, as judges placed over dioceses . . . and consequently their power is determined by rules established by the Pope."<sup>2</sup> And this is why certain bishops having abused their power, the Fourth Lateran Council restricted it to the granting of one year's indulgence at the consecration of a church, and of forty days on other occasions.<sup>3</sup> It is well to note that at this period the indulgences granted by Popes were yet but few and not wide in extent; hence this restriction put by the Council on the bishops' power was in reality much

<sup>1</sup> John xxi 17.

<sup>2</sup> St Thomas, *Suppl.*, q. xxvi, a. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Conc. Lateran. IV, can 62. This decree figures in the text of the *Decretals* "De Poenit. et Remiss." l. V, tit. xxxviii, c. 14.

less considerable than it at first sight appears. The principle which governs the whole matter is that the Roman Pontiff, to whom Christ has entrusted the dispensing of the whole spiritual treasury of the Church, possesses by his office full authority to grant indulgences. All others who enjoy some "ordinary" power of granting indulgences can do so only to the extent expressly conceded to them, and this power is very much restricted.<sup>1</sup> They cannot delegate their power to others without the express permission of the Holy See, nor apply indulgences to the dead nor attach any concession or pardon to objects, prayers and associations already indulgenced by the Holy See.<sup>2</sup>

The present common law of the Church grants certain limited powers to bishops and other prelates exercising jurisdiction.<sup>3</sup> The power of granting indulgences is a natural consequence of ordinary jurisdiction; therefore it cannot belong to bishops who are not exercising such jurisdiction. Titular bishops (those once called "in partibus"), bishops who have resigned, coadjutors—even with the right of succession—cannot grant these indulgences.<sup>4</sup> By the same rule, an ordinary bishop may not exercise his right outside the limits of his diocese, unless it happens to be in some degree for the benefit of his own flock. Inferior "prelates," whatever their dignity, have no power, innate or ordinary, of conferring indulgences.

Thus we find Innocent III, at the Fourth Lateran

<sup>1</sup> *Cod. Jur. Can.* 912.

<sup>2</sup> *Can.* 913.

<sup>3</sup> Cardinals may grant 200 days, Archbishops 100 days, Bishops 50 days (*Can.* 239, § 1, n. 24; 274, § 2; 349, § 2). Also any priest assisting the dying may grant the Apostolic blessing with a plenary indulgence (*Can.* 468, § 2); Bishops and other prelates have power to grant a similar concession at certain times (*Can.* 914).

<sup>4</sup> From *Can.* 1166, § 3, even titular Bishops may grant an indulgence of one year on the occasion of consecrating a church or altar.

Council,<sup>1</sup> severely reproofing certain abbots who, usurping the rights of bishops, had taken upon themselves to grant indulgences. He forbade them to do so in future, save in the case of a special indult<sup>2</sup> or of legitimate custom.

The power of granting indulgences depending, as we have seen, on jurisdiction, and not on Holy Orders, may be *delegated* by the Holy See even to persons who have not received the priesthood.<sup>3</sup> Instances of special delegations of this kind are to be found in history.<sup>4</sup> In the case of delegated faculties granted by the Pope, the fount of authority, it should be remembered that the papal power is exercised through one of the Roman Congregations. Clement IX instituted the Congregation of Indulgences for this purpose in 1669. In 1908 the power was annexed to the Holy Office. It is now vested in the Sacred Penitentiary<sup>5</sup> which has the right, under pain of nullity, of examining an authentic copy of any papal concessions, if given for the faithful in general.<sup>6</sup>

7. But besides legitimate authority, the prelate granting an indulgence must have, as we have seen, *a just motive* for granting it, and one that is proportionate to the indulgence offered. For the prelates of the Church are not absolute masters but only the dispensers of this spiritual treasure, and a dispenser cannot dispose of the goods entrusted to him without reason. Moreover, Christ has given this power to his ministers for the edification and not the destruction of the Church. Now the indiscreet or unreasonable use

<sup>1</sup> Conc. Lateran. IV, c. 60; text inserted in the *Decretals* of Gregory IX, "De Excessibus Praelatorum," l. V, tit. xxxi, c. 12.

<sup>2</sup> An indult is a licence granted by the Pope authorising an exception from the common law of the Church.

<sup>3</sup> St Thomas, l. c., a. 2.

<sup>4</sup> For instance there exists at Monte Cassino a concession of A.D. 1229. See Du Cange, *Glossarium*, at the word "Indulgentia."

<sup>5</sup> Can. 258, § 2.

<sup>6</sup> Can. 920.

of it would be seriously injurious to the faithful, whose indolence and impenitence it would encourage, whilst encouraging a contempt for the power of the keys; and the last wish of the Church, in granting indulgences, is in any way to foster sloth or to dispense sinners from the divine precept of doing penance. All that she proposes is to supply what they may be unable to fulfil themselves, on account of human weakness, and thus to help them to pay a debt which they cannot entirely cancel out of their own resources.

Such is the motive constantly set forth in papal Bulls. In fact these exact, as a necessary condition, that the penitent should be truly contrite, an expression which implies at least a serious hatred of grave faults, a firm purpose of not falling into them again and a sincere desire of satisfying divine justice. No doubt the total absence of any such dispositions in the penitent would nullify the indulgence granted.

Nevertheless it would be an error to think that, if the existing motive were simply disproportionate to the extent of the indulgence, the latter would therefore be null in the degree by which it exceeded the required motive. For (as will shortly be explained) this motive is not the *raison d'être* of the indulgence, which draws its value from the infinite treasure of satisfactions of Christ and the saints. It is only a condition required, in order that the intention of those who have superabundantly satisfied may be carried on to us by the transferring of these satisfactions; otherwise, as St Thomas explains, the transfer would have no definite application.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, when the Pope grants, for instance, a year's indulgence for a visit to a church, this visit is not the *raison d'être* of the indulgence. It is, so to speak,

<sup>1</sup> See Supplem. q. xxv, a. 2. See also author's *Dissertatio de Indulgentiarum valore*, Romae, 1900, pp. 20 foll.



nothing but a chain that connects the saints who have made satisfaction with the faithful who are to profit by their merits. The accomplishment of the visit required, therefore, distinguishes those Christians to whom the indulgence is to be granted from those to whom it does not apply.

It might perhaps happen that a prelate did wrong by granting an excessive indulgence for a work of small importance, but the indulgence itself would be none the less valid. If the Church has sometimes revoked enormous indulgences attached to insignificant pious works, this was not because she considered them invalid, but because such concessions might possibly hinder the faithful from giving themselves to the works of penance so often inculcated by our Lord in his Gospel.

Two remarks are here called for. First, the Church is, on this point, the most competent judge, for she is promised the help of the Holy Spirit. Therefore it would be rash and presumptuous for us to accuse her of lacking wisdom in the grant she makes. "A just ground," says Bl. Robert Bellarmine, "is always necessary; but it is not the place of subjects to judge whether in each case the motive is or is not just; their duty is to believe that it is really just."<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, we are not to estimate the importance of the motive that prompts the Church to grant such or such an indulgence by the persons to whom it is offered, nor even by the works imposed, considered in themselves. We are chiefly to take into account the *general good* that she has in view—the glory of God, the edification of the faithful, the increase of piety, the defence of truth, the salvation of souls, etc. Thus, it might happen that a greater indulgence would be due to a rich man for an alms—even a small one—

<sup>1</sup> *Controv. t. II, Tract. de Indulg. I, c. 12.*

than for several days' fasting, not because it is more difficult for him to give alms than to fast, but on account of the end to be attained. The good works promoted by the money given by him may bring about the glory of God better than a year's fast on bread and water.

It is not easy to determine precisely what this "just motive" should be. The learned Father Lainez<sup>1</sup> says that "the internal reform and the peace of the Church are important motives for the granting of a plenary indulgence, because they relate immediately to the glory of God and the good of his Church. Consequently, whatever is calculated efficaciously to promote this reform suffices as the ground for an indulgence. Such a ground, for instance, may be the frequenting of the sacraments of Penance and the holy Eucharist, zeal for prayer and mortification, long pious pilgrimages, and so forth.

"Hence, practices of but small importance in themselves may be sufficient when joined to more important ones from which they are inseparable. Such are visits to the Basilica of St Peter during the Jubilee year, or receiving the papal blessing on Easter Day. For if these acts considered merely as such are comparatively easy, the persons who perform them, by the very fact of so doing, make public profession of their faith in the Church's unity under one pastor. This unity strengthens the bonds of charity and obedience and promotes the greater glory of God and the greater good of the Church; and for this reason one may grant a plenary indulgence to the practice."

If this "just ground" is necessary in the case of granting indulgences to the living who are subject to the tribunal of the Church, still more is it required when these indulgences are applied to the faithful departed, who depend on God's tribunal alone.

<sup>1</sup> *Disp. Trid.* II, III-III7.

Hence St Thomas says truly that "the prelate cannot grant to the dead as much indulgence as he wishes, but only as much as the ground or motive allows."<sup>1</sup>

8. Such are the two conditions required on the part of the superior for the validity of an indulgence, and their reasons may here be shown.

The necessity for a right authority brings into prominence the high dignity of the invisible head of the Church, Jesus Christ, on whom depends all authority in heaven and on earth. It accustoms the faithful to acknowledge, with an ever-increasing supernatural faith, the Son of God in the person of his Representative. To the pastors themselves it serves as a reminder of the need for union with Christ and his Vicar. For, should they be cut off from the tree of life, their ministry would become a mere show and their power a useless pretence.

Again, the need of a just motive for the conferring of indulgences reminds both the faithful and their pastors that they must not belittle the value of Christ's sufferings or those of his saints; that the Blood of the new Covenant is not a thing that may be carelessly trodden underfoot; and that if they would apply it to themselves they must first "supply what is wanting to the Passion of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

9. Next we come to the conditions required from those who wish to gain indulgences.<sup>3</sup> The question must be examined under a twofold aspect. It is one thing to possess the inherent capability or power to profit by an indulgence offered; it is another thing

<sup>1</sup> St Thomas, in *IV Sent.*, dist. 45, q. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Cod. Jur. Can.* 925, § 1, "Ut quis capax sit sibi lucrando indulgentias, debet esse baptizatus, non excommunicatus, in statu gratiae saltem in fine operum praescriptorum, subditus concedentis. § 2, Ut vero subjectum capax eas revera lucratur debet habere intentionem saltem generalem eas lucrando et opera injuncta implere statuto tempore ac debito modo secundum concessionis tenorem."

actually to gain what is being offered. To take quite a different example in order to explain the distinction: to be capable of receiving Holy Orders the recipient must be of the male sex; actually to receive the Sacrament he must have the requisite intention. It is somewhat similar in the matter of indulgences. Before a person is capable of profiting by them he must be baptised, for the favour is obtained by a participation in the goods of the Church, to which no one has a right except those who are members of the Church by baptism. For a similar reason excommunicated persons are not capable of profiting by these concessions.<sup>1</sup>

It may here be asked whether heretics or schismatics, who are in good faith, may gain indulgences, supposing they be in the grace of God and fulfil the prescribed works. To this we answer in the negative, for, as St Thomas observes,<sup>2</sup> as a whole kingdom may be placed under interdict for the sin of the king, so men, who without their fault are living in heresy or schism, may be deprived of the sacraments of the Church<sup>3</sup> and consequently of some of the sacramentals,<sup>4</sup> as also of indulgences and temporal benefices or livings. But this does not prevent the Pope from making heretics and schismatics who are in good faith partakers of these privileges if he so wishes. Thus we find that Leo XIII granted an indulgence to Englishmen irrespective of their religion.<sup>5</sup>

A further explanation of what we advance may be drawn from the difference between a man born of parents formally belonging to a non-Catholic sect and one born of either infidel or heretic parents who

<sup>1</sup> Can. 2262.

<sup>2</sup> *Supplem.* q. xxi, art. i.

<sup>3</sup> Can. 731, § 2.

<sup>4</sup> Blessings may be given to non-Catholics, Can. 1149. Cf. Can. 2275, 2°.

<sup>5</sup> Ep. apost. ad Anglos, *Amantissimae voluntatis*, 14 Apr. 1895. Acta Leonis XIII, vol. xv, p. 154.

adhere to no constituted sect. The first being attached to a sect formally opposed to the true Church of Christ cannot enjoy the use of the goods of this Church, although he may adhere to it in his heart; the other, being authentically and regularly inscribed by baptism in the Catholic Church, enjoys all its rights, gifts and privileges, although his parents, through their own fault, are deprived of the same.<sup>1</sup>

A further condition, which is a logical consequence of what has already been said on jurisdiction, requires a person to be the subject of the authority conceding the indulgence before he can be said to be capable of profiting by it.

But the most important requirement, on the ground of capability, is that he should be in the state of grace. This is indeed evident. For to hope that God will remit the temporal pain due to our sins, whilst we are his enemies, would be as absurd as to suppose that he will forgive the sins themselves whilst we remain attached to them, and intend to commit them again. This would be acting like a man who begs some special favour of one whom he is actually trying hard to offend. Further, the sinner being a dead member of the Church, cannot benefit by the merits of her living members;<sup>2</sup> and, besides, he who is in a state of mortal sin is deserving of eternal punishment, and could not expect God to remit the lesser penalty whilst he is liable to the greater. Hence it is not, and could not be, within the Church's intention to grant indulgences to those in mortal sin.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the author's *De Sacra Doctrina*, q. iii, a. 3, nn. 17, 18, p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> St Thomas, *Suppl.*, q. xxvii, a. 1.

<sup>3</sup> We are aware that some theologians maintain the possibility, even in a state of mortal sin, of gaining a partial indulgence where it concerns the penalty due to sins formerly forgiven. But this opinion cannot be reconciled with the general law that whoever is to profit by indulgences must be in communion with those



However, theologians, resting on the authority of St Antoninus,<sup>1</sup> hold that when a Bull for granting indulgences—of the Jubilee, for example—prescribes several distinct works, it is enough for the last of these to be performed in a state of grace, because it is only at the end that the indulgence takes effect. This doctrine is sanctioned by the Code.<sup>2</sup> As for the works preceding this one, it is enough if they are done in a spirit of penance and of detachment from mortal sin.

Affection for a single venial sin prevents the complete gaining of a plenary indulgence. For this reason the Church has determined that the grant of a plenary indulgence is to be understood in the sense that if a person does not gain a plenary remission, he gains a partial remission according to his dispositions.<sup>3</sup> It is, in fact, impossible to obtain remission of the penalty whilst the *guilt* is unforgiven; and a sinner cannot hope to be pardoned for the guilt of all his sins if he is lacking contrition even for one venial sin.

The absolute necessity of being in a state of grace explains the meaning of phrases which are commonly used in the grant of an indulgence, when no explicit condition requiring confession is mentioned. Such clauses as, for example, “provided they recite . . . *with a contrite heart*” clearly imply the necessity of being in a state of grace.

Whether it is essential to be in a state of grace, in order to be capable of gaining indulgences to be applied to the dead, cannot be stated with certainty. We shall discuss the question in a later chapter.

10. In order that a person who is *capable* may actually

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whose satisfactions are applied to him, which can only be by means of grace; and, moreover, the theologians who maintain this opinion recommend, in practice, a state of grace. Cf. Palmieri, *Tract. de Poenit.*, p. 451.

<sup>1</sup> *Summa*, Part I, tit. x, c. iii, § 5, in fine.

<sup>2</sup> Can. 925.

<sup>3</sup> Can. 926.

gain an indulgence he must have the requisite intention and must perform the works prescribed and observe all the conditions laid out. Some degree of intention is required, just as it is for sharing in the precious fruits of redemption by the holy sacrifice of the Mass or by the sacraments. It is not, however, necessary that this intention should be actual:<sup>1</sup> it is enough for it to be once formed and not retracted, for then it morally remains and thus determines the fulfilment of the works prescribed. But as it is, perhaps, open to doubt whether even this degree of intention is present, many Catholics are accustomed to renew it every morning. St Leonard of Port Maurice advised the faithful to add to their morning prayer the definite intention of gaining, in the course of the day, all the indulgences attached to whatever good works they might do.

It is not necessary to know exactly what indulgences are attached to a good work, nor even if the work is indulgenced. God, who sees all things, keeps a strict account; and if he does not forget the least increase of our debt, neither does he neglect what is to our credit.<sup>2</sup> It suffices, as the Code says, if the intention is a "general" one.<sup>3</sup> Even when the intention is more explicit and actual, as when one is gaining a rare and unusual indulgence like that of the Holy Year, it does not mean that, throughout the performance of the specified works, the mind is to be harassed by actually thinking of the indulgence. An intention of this kind is undesirable and well-nigh impossible. If an intention is made the previous night to receive Holy Communion the next morning, the Sacrament should be received in the normal manner, without any necessary advertence to the purpose which prompted it. Similarly in praying for the Pope's intention, it suffices to

<sup>1</sup> See Struggl, O.S.M., *Theol. Moral.* xiii, q. i, art. 4, n. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See *Theol. Mech. de Indulg.*, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Can. 925, § 2.

begin the prayer with that purpose and then apply all one's energy to lifting the mind and heart to God.

11. Lastly, the Christian must exactly perform all the works laid down for obtaining the indulgence. Hence if, for any reason, a person cannot manage to do the acts required, an indulgence is of no use to him. For instance, children who have not made their first Communion cannot gain an indulgence of which receiving the Blessed Eucharist is one condition, unless the indult has provided some alternative. The required conditions must be strictly observed, as to place or time, and ignorance or good faith do not make good any defect.

It is further necessary that each one should himself perform the acts imposed, and it will not suffice for him to get them done by a representative, except in the case of almsgiving. If the prescribed works cannot be performed, the present law allows the confessor to commute the conditions of most indulgences in the case of people who are legitimately prevented from fulfilling them in the prescribed manner,<sup>1</sup> but this cannot be done on one's own authority. True, one Christian may apply his own sufferings to another, and so satisfy for him; but it is not the same with indulgences. The superior, from whom alone the concession proceeds, understands that he only shall gain the indulgence who himself does the works appointed. "If the concession," says St Thomas, "were expressed in these terms: 'He who shall do such and such a work, or for whom it shall be done, may gain such or such an indulgence,' then the indulgence would profit the one for whom the work is performed; but in this case it would not be the doer of the good work who would communicate the benefit

<sup>1</sup> Can. 935.

to the other, but the prelate, if he had taken this unusual mode of granting it."<sup>1</sup>

A work which is already obligatory from some other ecclesiastical law cannot serve also as a condition for gaining an indulgence, unless it is otherwise expressly stated in the grant.<sup>2</sup>

The faithful, then, cannot be too strongly recommended to inquire carefully into the various conditions prescribed in papal Bulls, or other forms of concession, for the gaining of indulgences, as otherwise they will run the risk of finding their hopes frustrated. It often happens that, from having neglected some one only of such conditions, they are deprived of numerous indulgences. This recommendation is of special importance where confraternities are concerned; for the omission of required formalities in erecting and regulating these may result in depriving many people of indulgences.

12. A question may here arise whether a superior can himself participate in the indulgences that he grants?<sup>3</sup> To this there are two answers: on the one hand, the superior cannot grant an indulgence to himself alone; on the other, he may benefit by the indulgence that he grants to his subjects.

The reason of the first statement is that one and the same individual cannot be at the same time superior

<sup>1</sup> St Thomas, 1. c., art. 3, ad 2. It is well to recall here the words of the *Raccolta* of indulgences (official edition of 1898, p. viii): "If one omits, entirely or in any notable portion, any one whatever of the works prescribed, whether from ignorance or negligence, or because it is impossible to accomplish it, if one fails in any one whatever of the circumstances prescribed, of time, place or other things, and whatever may be the cause of the failure, one does not gain the indulgence." For general decisions concerning time, place, etc., see the *Raccolta*, p. ix foll.

<sup>2</sup> Can. 932 makes an exception in favour of the sacramental penance or satisfaction which may be at the same time enriched with an indulgence.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Can. 201.

and subordinate, which would be the case of a prelate granting an indulgence to himself alone. In his quality of superior a prelate ought always to aim at procuring the honour of God and the good of the Church, without needing to be incited to this by anybody. Now, as the granting of indulgences has for its precise motive the inciting of the faithful to procure the good of the Church and the glory of God, it is evident that a superior cannot grant any indulgence whatever to himself alone.

But, on the other hand, he may benefit by the indulgence that he grants to others; for he may avail himself, personally, of the right belonging to all the faithful. He is then considered as a member of the Church, and, as such, may profit by the concessions which, in his capacity of superior, it is his calling to grant.

This is a totally different case from the first. In the first case the superior would merely concede something, and the immediate effect of the concession would be an act of jurisdiction. Now nobody has jurisdiction over himself; it is therefore as impossible for a man to grant himself an indulgence as to absolve or excommunicate his own self. In the second case the superior makes use of the concession that he granted to his flock, and the immediate effect of this use is his act of dispensation—*i.e.*, the remission of the penalty due to sin. He may therefore turn to his own profit the indulgences that he has bestowed, just as he may benefit by the jurisdiction that he gives to priests for the tribunal of penance, or administer the holy Eucharist to himself. In all these cases there is no exercise of jurisdiction by a prelate over himself, but merely an act of dispensation performed in a reflex manner.<sup>1</sup>

13. Theologians have greatly disputed over the

<sup>1</sup> St Thomas, *loc. cit.*, a. 4.



nature of indulgences, as to whether they have really the value attributed to them by the papal Bulls of concession. The ground of doubt is that sometimes a plenary indulgence is granted for works comparatively very slight, such as, for example, the prayer, "O good and most sweet Jesus," said before a crucifix after holy Communion; whilst, at the same time, only a partial indulgence is granted for the recitation of much longer prayers, such as the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, or for the performance of really arduous works, such as visiting the sick in hospitals or teaching Christian doctrine to the ignorant.

To solve this difficulty some theologians have declared that an indulgence is to be measured by the faith and devotion of those who perform the prescribed works. For instance, according to this view, when the Church grants a hundred days' indulgence for the visit to a certain sanctuary, she does not really mean to grant the remission exactly as it is set forth; but by this form of expression she tries to stimulate Christians to good deeds; in short, each one will receive in the end an indulgence proportionate to his devotion.

Others have thought of measuring the value of the indulgence by the quantity of the works done, taking into account both the condition of the man who does them and the advantage that results from them to the Church.

But both these opinions are untenable. In either case it would be impossible to avoid accusing the Church of betraying the truth, since she would be promising a remission which does not really exist; and this is precisely the teaching of Luther, who called indulgences "pious frauds for the use of the faithful."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, if one receives nothing from an indulgence

<sup>1</sup> Prop. 18. Condemned by the Bull *Exurge Domine*. Denzinger, 758.

but what is warranted by the work done, what becomes of the great benefits of indulgences, made so much of by the saints? Must we not, in this case, look upon them as merely the commutation of penalties, instead of being what they really are, an express condonation of these penalties, valid before the Church and before God?

Other theologians, amongst whom we find the illustrious names of B. Albert the Great and St Bonaventure, demand, for the validity of an indulgence, a proportionate cause. For a concession of wider extent, they say, a relatively graver cause is required, and consequently the indulgence remains null in the measure by which it exceeds the cause. The reason for this opinion is that otherwise the Church, when granting such great indulgences for causes of so little weight, might be accused of wasting that sacred treasure, composed of the sufferings of Christ and of the saints, which has been entrusted to her care.

But this is to misunderstand the clear and constant practice of the Church, which grants at times, as we have seen, great indulgences for slight works, and in such an absolute manner as to leave no room for doubt as to the concession. Consequently the teaching of these authors, besides leaving the faithful in a very deplorable uncertainty as to what they may gain, has the unfortunate result of tending to dishonour the Church, whose sincerity it puts in question.

There remains then no alternative but to say absolutely with St Thomas<sup>1</sup> that indulgences possess the value assigned to them in the acts of concession. But to understand this assertion properly it must be shown, first, by what power the prelates of the Church grant indulgences, and next what we are to understand by "the cause" for which they grant them.

<sup>1</sup> Suppl. q. xxv, art. 2.

14. Jesus Christ left to his Church a double key—the key of *Order* and the key of *Jurisdiction*. By the first his ministers open the gates of heaven to the faithful in the tribunal of penance; by the second, they remove even outside this tribunal the obstacles which might bar their penitents' entrance through these gates.

Now priests alone can possess the key of order, since to them alone belongs the administration of the sacraments. On the other hand, persons not possessing sacerdotal authority, as is sometimes the case with legates, archdeacons, etc., may be authorized to use the key of jurisdiction. As the effect of the sacraments does not depend upon man but upon God, a priest cannot decide in the sacred tribunal what portion of the penalty due to sin is remitted to the penitent. This depends upon the latter's contrition, known to God alone. The effect of the key of jurisdiction, on the other hand, depends upon the will of legitimate prelates; and hence, just as they can deprive Church members of ecclesiastical communion for certain delinquencies, so they can loose them from excommunication, in whole or in part, at their own will. This is why, indulgences being an effect of the power of jurisdiction, it belongs to prelates to fix the scale by which they intend the remission of penalty due for sin, granted through this means, to be measured.

15. As to the effective cause of the grant of these indulgences, it is no other than the infinite treasure composed of the merits of our Lord and his saints, which merits are more than enough—as we have seen above—to cancel the debt due to the sins of the whole world.

Just as, in virtue of the communion of saints, one Christian may freely apply to a brother his own satis-

factions, and so pay that brother's debt, even so ecclesiastical authorities—that is, the Pope and the prelates who are under him—may, according to their own good pleasure, distribute to their subjects the wealth of these treasures. But this distribution must be applied to individuals; and in order that such an application may be made, the intention of those who have acquired the merits must in each case actually reach the sinner, which it cannot do without some definite means of guidance. Thus, for example, the visit to a certain sanctuary, to which a year's indulgence is attached, is the reason for which one member of the Church rather than another receives the application of Christ's and the saints' merits, in the measure laid down. This visit, therefore, is not, properly speaking, the effective cause of the indulgence, but only the reason which justifies and brings to pass its particular distribution, by directing the intention of Christ and of the saints to the person who makes that visit.

If then the “real cause” of indulgences is neither the devotion of the faithful, nor the greatness of the works done, nor the object for which they are granted, but simply the treasure of the Church, it follows that the value of indulgences is not to be measured by any of the above-named elements, but only by the superabundant merits forming the treasure itself. There must, however, be brought into play some motive of piety which shall honour God and serve the Church, in order that the intention of Christ and his saints may be actually applied to the individual sinner.

16. Granted, then, that the acting prelate has the required authority, that the faithful have charity (a necessary condition for sharing in the communion of saints), and that there also exists this pious motive,

we must affirm that indulgences possess the exact value attributed to them when granted.<sup>1</sup>

Hence it must be admitted, and the case is not rare, that a considerable remission may be granted for a slight work, such as the saying of a short prayer; and that *vice versa* a long penitential exercise may be rewarded by a comparatively slight indulgence. Consequently it may be quite possible for one man to gain certain indulgences easily which another can only gain with difficulty. Such, for those living in Rome, are the indulgences attached to visiting the basilicas of the eternal city, or for the canons of a chapter those that may be gained by visits to a church where they go daily for the Divine Office.

Should occasion be taken from this to murmur against the Church, and to say that she does not distribute her goods equally to all, it is answer enough to recall the words of the householder in the Gospel: "I will give to this last even as to thee; is it not lawful for me to do what I will, or is thy eye evil because I am good?"<sup>2</sup>

Further, those who cannot gain indulgences without travelling long distances, whilst others can gain the same easily, need not on that account despair. According to a just remark of St Thomas,<sup>3</sup> though indulgences may be very useful for the remission of penalties, nevertheless other satisfactory works are more meritorious in respect of the essential reward, which is

<sup>1</sup> "Est dicendum quod indulgentiae simpliciter tantum valent quantum praedicantur, dummodo ex parte dantis sit auctoritas, et ex parte recipientis caritas, et ex parte causae pietas." (St Thomas, *Suppl.*, q. xxv, art. 2.)

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xx 14, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.* Moreover, those for whom a long journey is a moral impossibility are often allowed to gain an indulgence on some other condition. Thus, in the Jubilee of 1925, nuns, invalids, etc., could gain it without going to Rome. (A.A.S., xvi, p. 316.)



infinitely better than the lessening of temporal punishment. This consideration is well calculated to increase our esteem for the divine mercy and justice. For if on the one hand we see enormous facilities granted for obtaining remission of the penalties due to our sins, on the other these numerous concessions make us understand how great in the opinion of the Church is the rigour of divine justice, since the Son of God, wishing to appease that justice, chose to acquire such great merits through his sufferings. This doctrine again explains the untiring ardour of the faithful in profiting by this mysterious treasure and their firm persuasion of thus cancelling the debt due for their sins.

It might be objected that if indulgences have in the eyes of God the exact value set forth in the granting of them, they dispense us too easily from our obligation of doing penance for our faults, and that thus they may tend to make us careless in this life, and may expose us to the temptation of enjoying this world's goods as fully as possible whilst yet hoping to go straight to heaven when we die. But the reply to this is easy. Indulgences do not abrogate the law of penance. They do not dispense the faithful either from bearing their cross in the footsteps of our Lord, or from taking all necessary means for avoiding sin in future.

Moreover, is not the very trouble that the faithful take in gaining the indulgences in itself a wholesome satisfaction?

Certain persons appeal to the ancient usage of the Church in granting indulgences, and indeed of small amount, for really painful practices only; and they conclude from this that the indulgences of our own day are of no use unless accompanied by sufficient penance. We reply to them that the discipline of the Church has varied with different times. And if the

earlier Christians had full confidence in indulgences whatever they were, not on account of works performed, but because of their own firm persuasion that the Church cannot lead to error, why should the Christians of today not have an exactly similar confidence in the abundant indulgences distributed to them by the very same Church? The Church has not ceased to be the faithful mother and incorruptible guardian of the deposit of faith.

This is quite enough to set aside the opinions of Cardinal Cajetan,<sup>1</sup> of Navarrus,<sup>2</sup> and especially of Amort,<sup>3</sup> who all require from the faithful a penance proportioned to the extent of the indulgence, without which satisfaction, they say, indulgences would be of no use to them.

These theologians declare that, in a well-governed State, the public revenues are never employed to pay the debts of those who are capable of satisfying their creditors out of their own resources; and they add that it would be unjust to ask a friend to pay for us when we can pay for ourselves. But these arguments and others of a like kind show a misunderstanding of the nature of indulgences. It is precisely because of their poverty that the faithful, anxious to satisfy divine justice as quickly as possible by effacing all their debt, have recourse to the infinite treasure left them by Jesus Christ expressly to supply their need. Thus do they show clearly how they value the possessions won for them by him at the cost of all the torments he endured.

We must, then, take it as certain that indulgences have before God the value attributed to them in the grant made by legitimate prelates. This conclusion

<sup>1</sup> Tract. x *De suscip. Ind.*, quaest. i.

<sup>2</sup> In Comment. de Jubil., n. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *De Origine, etc., Indulg.*, p. ii, sect. iv, pp. 208, foll.

is implicitly contained in the practice of the Church, which does not grant indulgences to those who have satisfied, but to those who are truly repentant and have confessed their sins—a clear proof that the indulgence, according to the mind of the Church, does not dispense from contrition and confession but takes the place of satisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

Finally we must take note, with Cardinal Pallavicini,<sup>2</sup> that it is difficult, and even impossible, to know with absolute certainty whether or not we have gained the promised indulgence, for a man can never be quite sure of his own disposition. But this uncertainty “is for many a stimulant which incites them to good works and thus increases their hope of sharing in the treasure of the Church by strengthening it every day.”<sup>3</sup>

From all this it clearly follows that an indulgence is the remission of a debt contracted towards both God and the Church, to which the sinner is liable even after having received the pardon of his sins. This remission is made in virtue and by means of the application of the superabundant merits of Christ and his saints, by the authority of lawful pastors who grant it for a just and reasonable motive.

Hence we conclude that an indulgence is at the same time a payment (*solutio*) and a remission (*absolutio*). It is a rigorous payment of the debt contracted by the sinner, for the whole penalty is exacted to “the last farthing”;<sup>4</sup> it is a remission, because the sum paid does not come from the sinner’s own funds, he being destitute of any, but from the inexhaustible treasure of the Church.

In ancient grants of indulgences the formula, *remittimus de poenitentiis injunctis dies*, etc.—“we remit

<sup>1</sup> *Quodlib.* II, q. viii, a. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Apud Bened. XIV, *Instit.* liii.

<sup>3</sup> See *De Indulgentiarum valore*.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v 26.

so many days of penances imposed," was usually employed. These words meant that the penitent obtained from God the forgiveness of a part of his debt equal to the amount that he would have rendered by accomplishing the canonical penances laid upon him, or even the penance which the priest might, strictly speaking, have imposed in the tribunal of penance. Sometimes the word *injunctis* was followed by these other words, *et injungendis*—"to be imposed." "This expression," says Fr. Beringer, "would refer to such penances as were still to be imposed on the pardoned sinner. For the Church has always admitted that an indulgence gained by the faithful replaces, wholly or in part, the penances that the bishop, or even the confessor would have had to inflict according to ancient penitential canons."<sup>1</sup>

As, however, these expressions were open to misunderstanding, there were added to them later on, in the Bulls of concession, these other words, *vel alias quomodolibet debitis poenitentiis*—"or other penances due in any manner whatsoever."

17. There are several kinds of indulgences. Some are granted to individuals, or to certain classes of individuals, such, for instance, as religious or missionaries, and these are called *personal* indulgences. Others are attached to the use of definite objects like rosaries, medals, etc., and are named *real* indulgences.<sup>2</sup> Lastly there are those granted for visits to specified places—to churches or altars—called *local* indulgences. The length of time for which an indulgence is granted also varies, some being for an *indefinite period* and others for only a *limited* number of years; the former of these go by the name of *perpetual*, the latter of

<sup>1</sup> Beringer, *Les Indulgences*, t. i, p. 54, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> When these objects either perish or are sold, the indulgence ceases. Can. 926, § 2.

*temporary*. Some are conceded for the *living*, others for the *dead*. As a rule all papal concessions are applicable to the dead,<sup>1</sup> but there are exceptions. Thus the Jubilee indulgence of 1925 could be gained, the first time, only by the person who fulfilled the required conditions, but if gained subsequently it could be applied to the dead.<sup>2</sup>

But the most important of all divisions is that which distinguishes *plenary* from *partial* indulgences. The first entirely remit the temporal punishment that strictly corresponds to the sin according to the justice of God, which penalty the Church would impose on the sinner if she knew its amount accurately as God knows it, and which the culprit must pay in full to win the discharge of his debt. The second remit only an appointed portion of this penalty. It is therefore not accurate to say that a plenary indulgence is a remittance of all the pains of purgatory; for, when one gains an indulgence for the souls in purgatory, the degree of its application depends on its acceptance by God, as we shall show in the next chapter; and hence we are never certain that the penalty of these souls is fully remitted. But if the indulgence is gained for the living, it means the remission of the temporal punishment which they would have to suffer either in this life or in the next.

It might here be objected that, if the power of the keys does not extend beyond this life, as has already been said, there is no reason why an indulgence could remit all that we are to suffer in the next world whilst we are living, any more than it can after we are dead; and hence there is a contradiction in saying that, by a plenary indulgence, all the temporal punishment which we would have to suffer either in this life or in the next is entirely remitted.

<sup>1</sup> *Cod. Jur. Can.* 930.

<sup>2</sup> *A.A.S.*, xvi, p. 342.



To solve this difficulty we may observe that, when we say that the Church, by granting us a plenary indulgence, remits for us what we should otherwise have to suffer in purgatory, we do not mean to say that she has any direct power over the souls in purgatory, for the moment a man dies he falls directly under God's immediate tribunal. But as, whilst we are still on earth, we are subject to the Church's direct authority, even so that debt which, if we were dead, we would have to pay in purgatory, where the Church indeed has no control, is now inherent in us, and so is immediately subject to the power of the keys, by which the Church can free us entirely from our debt, without, for all that, exercising any direct power over the souls that are in purgatory.

By the fact that the Church has direct authority over us during our lifetime, it follows that she has also authority in binding or loosing that which inseparably clings to us, such as sin and the punishment due to sin; and as, when she absolves us from mortal sin in the sacrament of Penance, she remits to us the eternal punishment of hell, without, for all that, having any power over the souls of the damned, so by a plenary indulgence she remits to us during life the temporal punishment that we would incur in purgatory if we were dead, although she has no direct power over the souls that are in purgatory.

With regard to the souls in purgatory, as we are not sure how far a plenary indulgence may relieve them, it follows that it is a pious custom to apply at the same time several plenary indulgences to a soul in purgatory, which is not the case where the living are concerned; a plenary indulgence fully gained by a living Christian infallibly producing his entire liberation from his debt, as will be shown in the next chapter.

It may be asked how it is that the faithful

sometimes endeavour to gain several plenary indulgences in the same day, it being a moral impossibility to obtain several entire remittances of the same debt.

Various answers have been given to this question. In the first place, most plenary indulgences are applicable to the souls in purgatory. Now, these souls are very numerous and, on the other hand, we can never know (as already stated) in what measure God accepts the suffrages that we offer in their favour. We may then apply these indulgences not only to various souls—even though unknown to us—but also to one and the same soul, leaving the disposal of them in favour of this soul to the care and judgement of God. In the same way though a single Mass, considered in itself, might be enough to deliver all the souls in purgatory, it is none the less a laudable practice, approved by the Church, to have a number of Masses celebrated for the dead.

As regards our own selves, since we can never be perfectly certain of our own dispositions, it follows that the greater the number of plenary indulgences placed at our disposal by the Church, the greater is our chance of gaining at least one of them. Moreover, as indulgences always necessitate certain meritorious acts, we are encouraged in the practice of good works by the hope of gaining them, and so, even though we fully failed to benefit by each of the promised indulgences, they would none the less have a wholesome effect on us.

Whatever may be the intrinsic possibility of gaining several plenary indulgences for our own selves, on the same day, the definite law of the Church now is that a plenary indulgence may be gained only once a day, no matter how often the prescribed works are performed, unless there is an express provision to the

contrary.<sup>1</sup> The most famous exception is the *Portiuncula*, but there are several others which share this privilege.<sup>2</sup> With regard to these exceptions, we may be allowed to inquire what is the real intention of the Church in granting several plenary indulgences appointed for the same day. Does she expect each of the faithful to gain them all at once for himself? We would say not. Judging by all analogies to be drawn from her usual discipline, it rather appears to us that she is aiming at multiplying the means and opportunities for the faithful of gaining *one* plenary indulgence, in order that no Christian may be unable to acquire it if he chooses. If it should happen that certain persons have the means of fulfilling the conditions of several plenary indulgences at the same time, this is a consequence that was not directly foreseen or intended.

If then it is possible for the living to gain several different plenary indulgences on the same day, this is only because they were originally granted on diverse conditions, so that the possibility of their all being gained on the same day, by the same person, for his own self, is in a certain sense *praeter mentem Ecclesiae*. May we not, from all this, gather that it is enough for each person to endeavour to acquire the right dispositions for gaining *one* plenary indulgence for himself at a time?

It is true that the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences consulted as to whether the faithful could apply to themselves the plenary indulgence of the *Portiuncula*—granted, as we know, *toties quoties*, that is, for each visit—replied in the affirmative.<sup>3</sup> But we may understand this in the sense that the faithful may apply the

<sup>1</sup> *Cod. Jur. Can.* 928, § 1. “Indulgentia plenaria, nisi aliud expresse cautum sit, acquiri potest semel tantum in die, etsi idem opus praescriptum pluries ponatur.”

<sup>2</sup> See Theol. Mechl. *de Indulg.*, p. 43.      <sup>3</sup> August 17, 1892.

fruit of their indulgenced works to themselves in that proportion which the state of their souls permits.<sup>1</sup> Therefore for anybody who may feel certain of having fully gained a plenary indulgence, it is perfectly useless trying to gain another immediately afterwards. Such persons are advised to apply the remainder to the souls in purgatory.

We prefer to let the rule above-named stand—*i.e.*, that the possibility of gaining several plenary indulgences on the same *day* refers rather to divers classes of the faithful than to one individual. But we say that it is not the intention of the Church positively to authorize the same person to gain several such plenary indulgences at the same *time* for himself. This must, in any case, be particularly observed with regard to the plenary indulgence *in articulo mortis*, which may certainly be granted to the same person on different grounds, but which can be gained but once, as it takes effect only at the hour of death.<sup>2</sup>

18. It has now been made clear that an indulgence is not the pardon of sin, since it supposes the sin to have been already pardoned. True, it is sometimes spoken of as the pardon of sin, but then the word sin must undoubtedly be understood as “the punishment due to sin.” In many passages Holy Scripture takes the word sin in this sense.<sup>3</sup> The Liturgy does the same,<sup>4</sup> and St Augustine teaches that this word may have several meanings, that of “punishment for sin” included.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Beringer, *Les Indulgences*, t. II, Appendice II, n. 71, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *L'Avvisatore Ecclesiastico*, ser. VIII, n. 370, p. 551, Savonae, 1894. See also Mgr. B. Melata, *An Benedictio in articulo mortis pluries possit impertiri* (Biblioth. Analecta Ecclesiastica, n. 11).

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.*, 2 Mach. xii 46; 2 Cor. v 21, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Especially in the prayers for the dead.

<sup>5</sup> L. III, *Contra duas Epist. Pelag.*, c. vi, n. 16.

When, therefore, an indulgence is granted "from the guilt and the penalty—*a culpa et a poena*," the first part of the expression refers to the sacrament of Penance, the second to the indulgence proper.<sup>1</sup> According to Bl. Robert Bellarmine<sup>2</sup> it would signify that the sacrament of Penance is a previous condition for gaining the indulgence. The Pope remits the guilt by granting to priests, his subordinates, the power of absolving even from censures and reserved cases, he grants remission of the penalty by applying to this same penitent, after the pardon of the guilt, the satisfactions of Christ and his saints.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On this indulgence, about which we shall again speak hereafter (p. 417), the reader will find valuable information in N. Paulus, "Die Anfänge des sogenannten Ablasses von Strafe und Schuld." *Geschichte*, etc., II, B. xviii, p. 137, *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *De Indulg.* l. I, c. vii, Opp. t. vii, Col. Agrip. 1617, p. 432.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Lea devotes many pages (*op. cit.* p. 54, *seq.*) to the indulgences *a culpa et a poena*. According to him it has been generally admitted, especially in the Middle Ages, and relying on the tenor of papal Bulls, that by these indulgences the Pope intends to remit not only the penalty but also the guilt, without requiring the sinner to have even the slightest contrition for his faults. It is impossible for us here to undertake a detailed examination of the arguments put forward to support this thesis: they arise from utter ignorance of Catholic dogma. We must confine ourselves to a few passages picked out almost at random.

On p. 64 Mr. Lea, after having remarked that Dante "was too familiar with the theology of the period to make a mistake in such a matter," asserts that the divine poet looked upon the Jubilee Indulgence as a remission *a culpa* which delivered the sinner from hell. He draws this inference from two lines in which the poet (*Purgat.* Cant. ii, v. 98-99) says that for three months the Angel of Purgatory admitted all who presented themselves without difficulty. But the proof is worthless, for the poet's thought is quite different from Mr. Lea's interpretation of it, as the careful reading of the following lines (104-105) will show:

"Perocchè sempre quivi si raccoglie  
Qual verso d'Acheronte non si cala"—

"For it is there that those are always gathered together who do not go down to Acheron."

To understand this passage, it must be noted that Dante, taking his inspiration from mythology, had said that the de-



It would be equally inaccurate to assert that indulgences are nothing but the remission of canonical

parted souls were not admitted immediately into Purgatory, whilst Catholic belief recognises no such delay. But, from the lines quoted above, it is none the less clear that Dante admits of no possible deliverance from Acheron, that is, from Hell: indeed, according to him, nobody can enter Purgatory at all who is not in communion with the Church of Rome. The author of the Divine Comedy is therefore not in favour of Mr. Lea's thesis.

Still less convincing is the argument that Mr. Lea professes to draw (p. 65) from the name given in countries of Celto-Latin speech (*Romance idiom*) to an indulgence and to those who preach it, the former being called a pardon, and the latter pardoners. These expressions represent the Latin *venia*; and it is known that *venia* means not so much the pardon of the fault as the remission of the penalty.

There is a yet more evident abuse in the quotation from Capreolus made by Mr. Lea. "Capreolus," he says (p. 67), "seriously argued that the Pope has power to pardon the *culpa* as well as the *poena*." And he refers us to Amort (II, sect. iii, p. 178, n. lxxxvii). Turning to that author, we find a very different view of things. Capreolus does not profess that the Pope can remit the guilt by an indulgence, but only "*quod Papae sit authoritative omnem poenam dimittere*." Perhaps Mr. Lea was led into error by the argument cited in support of Capreolus's thesis: "*Minus est solvere a poena quam a culpa*." But it is clear, if only from the sentences that follow, that this absolution *a culpa* has reference to the sacrament of Penance. And Mr. Lea should have taken the trouble to read the answer to the argument: "It would follow that every priest who can absolve from sin could absolve from all penalty," which neither Capreolus nor any one else holds.

But where the prejudices of our author appear most clearly is in the interpretation that he gives (p. 31) to a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, declaring that absolution is not necessarily exacted when confession is prescribed as the condition of an indulgence. He concludes from this that indulgences have superseded the sacrament of Penance and can consequently remit the guilt. Nothing could be more false than this assertion. Several explanations can be given of the decree in question. We may say, with Bouvier, quoted by Mr. Lea (*loc. cit.*, n. 2), that it relates to persons whose lives are sufficiently holy for them to have no faults to acknowledge in frequent confessions; or that it has in view persons who have only venial sins to confess, for which the priest's absolution is not necessary; and, above all, we must answer that the confessor himself is sole judge as to giving, deferring or refusing absolution. In imposing,

penances that would have been imposed on the sinner according to ancient discipline. This idea, which we first learn from Alexander of Hales (1245) to have been put forward, probably as a mere academical opinion, by some unnamed theologian and which is shown to have been contradicted by all his contemporaries, was the foundation of Luther's Nineteenth Proposition, in which he maintained that indulgences had no value for remitting the penalties incurred by sin as regards the justice of God. Even though this assertion was condemned by Leo X in the Bull *Exsurge Domine*, the members of the pseudo-synod of Pistoja, nevertheless, declared that "Indulgence, according to its true meaning, is nothing else than a condonation of part of the penance imposed by the sacred canons on penitents."<sup>1</sup>

No doubt, as we shall see later, indulgences are even still granted, and to a certain extent reckoned, according to the rules of ancient canonical penances. But none the less did this proposition of the pseudo-synod deserve the condemnation passed upon it by Pius VI,<sup>2</sup> for, as St Thomas had already observed,<sup>3</sup>

as condition of such or such an indulgence, the obligation of approaching the sacrament of Penance, the Pope does not mean in any way to touch the rights or duty of the confessor, who remains perfectly free to absolve or not to absolve a penitent. Thus confession may be exacted from any man as a condition for gaining an indulgence; but that he should receive absolution is quite another thing; and this is what the Sacred Congregation meant by this decree.

Lastly Mr. Lea, forgetting how he had previously said (p. 60) that the Church had taken care to state that she granted indulgences only to Christians who were contrite or to such as had been to confession, arrives at the following extraordinary conclusion (p. 8): "Theologians continue to ascribe to indulgences, if not the power to wash away the guilt, at least some influence over and above the mere remission of the penalty." The refutation of this statement is contained in all that we have said above.

<sup>1</sup> Prop. 40. Denzinger, 1540.

<sup>2</sup> Bull, *Auctorem fidei*, of August 28, 1794. Gasparri, *Fontes*, II, n. 475.

<sup>3</sup> *In IV Sent.*, d. xx, q. i, a. 3, sol. 1.

such a doctrine expressly derogates from the privilege granted by Christ to St Peter, in the words, "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

Further, if indulgences are of use only in respect of the Church, and not in respect of God, we must say that the Church leads the faithful into error. For, according to another remark of St Thomas,<sup>2</sup> in dispensing her children from canonical penance only, she would be sending them before the tribunal of God as heavily burdened with debts as they had ever been. The faithful, deceived by a false hope of remission, would have neglected to do suitable penance, and thus indulgences, instead of being a wholesome practice, as declared by the Council of Trent,<sup>3</sup> would be nothing but a calamitous institution, which would have to be suppressed as quickly as might be for the general good.<sup>4</sup>

In any case, it must at least be acknowledged that indulgences granted by the Church as applicable to the souls in purgatory include something more than condonation of the canonical penalty, as the souls of the departed can no longer practise ecclesiastical penances.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi 19.

<sup>2</sup> Suppl. q. xxv, a. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Sess. XXV, Decr. *De Indulg.* Cf. Theol. Mechl. *de Indulg.*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, without falling into the error of Luther and the synod of Pistoja, we both can and ought to recognise that the remission of the penalty due to sin is based, now as formerly, on the reckoning of the penitential canons, which counted by days, by periods of forty days (*quarantains*), and by years. We must even go further, and allow, as we have seen, that the sinner is indebted not to God alone, but also to the Church. The error consists in pretending that the indulgence remits *only* the ecclesiastical penalty, and leaves the debt towards God intact.

<sup>5</sup> Noteworthy here is the observation of Dr. Nikolaus Paulus: "Wenn daher die Päpste den Kreuzfahrern, die im Kampfe fallen würden, einen Erlass der Sündenstrafen verheissen, und dazu noch einen grösseren Erlass als den Ueberlebenden, so ist

It may also be observed that since in the grants of indulgences, an appeal is made to God's infinite mercy, "de omnipotentis Dei misericordia," it must needs be inferred that the remission referred to is to be considered as valid before his all-just, though all-merciful, tribunal. Besides, the papal documents throughout the Middle Ages up to the present time clearly give one to understand that the promised remission comes from God himself, *a Domino, ex parte Dei*.

Lastly, we may note that heretics would not have attacked the Church and her teaching on this point so violently if indulgences had been nothing but the simple remission of canonical penance, as it is evident that she must be free to modify a punishment which she alone has established, as being due in the external forum of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

It would be doing some Protestant writers too much honour to take seriously the ludicrous travesties that they present to their readers as true accounts of indulgences. They turn them into "pardons for sin in consideration of certain sums of money agreed upon by a regular tariff"; or perhaps, still more absurdly, "pardons for sins that may be committed afterwards"; or, again, "permissions to sin." Such monstrous notions are as far from Catholic dogma as anything may be.<sup>2</sup>

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man doch sicher berechtigt, daraus zu schliessen, dass die Päpste damals schon der Ueberzeugung waren, ihr Erlass würde auch vor Gott Geltung haben," *Wissenschaftliche Beilage zur Germania*, N. 31, 3 Aug., 1911.

<sup>1</sup> See Wilmers, cited by Beringer, *Les Indulgences*, Part I, § 11, t. i, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> One would have thought that the time had passed for these misrepresentations. Yet Mr. Lea, writing in our own day, gives these chimerical notions as the faith of the mediæval Christians. What is most astonishing is the confidence with which he professes to base such absurdities on historic documents which, when carefully examined, contain clear proof of the contrary thesis (p. 83).

Far from being a permission to commit sin an indulgence does not even deliver the sinner, though repentant and even pardoned, from those consequences implied in the very idea of a sincere repentance—*e.g.* from the obligation of restoring stolen goods, of retracting calumnies, or of avoiding occasions of relapse.<sup>1</sup> So also with the natural consequences of sin, such as poverty, shame, illness, loss of character, etc.: all these are things that cannot be affected by an indulgence.

19. The reader may at this point like some information on the origin of the word indulgence.

It is met with several times in Holy Scripture, but with somewhat varied meanings. It sometimes is equivalent to release, deliverance, enfranchisement, as in the first verse of the sixty-first chapter of Isaias, in which the prophet says, in the person of Christ, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . he hath sent me . . . to preach a release to the captives"; for which the Vulgate has *ut prædicarem captivis*

<sup>1</sup> Amort (*op. cit.* p. 136) tells us that Eugenius IV, granting a plenary indulgence in favour of the Congregation of St Justin, expressly says: "Ne aliqui propterea procliviores reddantur ad illicita in posterum committenda, volumus quod si ex confidentia remissionis hujusmodi aliqua forsann commiserint, quod illa eis prædicta remissio nullatenus suffragetur." The same clause is found in two other grants made by the same Pope (Amort, pp. 145, 201). No doubt one may conclude from this that the Church wished to oppose the abuses and mistakes that some gross and ignorant souls might perhaps have mingled with their practice of gaining indulgences; but it must indeed be a prejudiced mind that could gather from these examples the conclusion that, in the opinion of the faithful then living, the indulgence was granted in view of sins to be subsequently committed. It would be well if such writers were to hear the story told by Cardinal Newman in his *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (London, 1851). A Protestant clergyman had declared on oath that he had seen with his own eyes, in the cathedral at Brussels, a list of the "prices for sins." On inquiry this monstrous scandal turned out to be a simple tariff for chair and bench rents!



*indulgentiam*, which word carries with it an idea of freeing, of releasing, of enfranchising, as appears from the Greek of the Septuagint, ἄφεσις, and more so yet from the Hebrew *dhêror*.

The same passage, with a slight change of words, is repeated in the eighteenth and nineteenth verses of the fourth chapter of St Luke. It is the one which our Blessed Lord came upon when he unfolded the book of Isaias in the Synagogue, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. . . . He hath sent me . . . to preach deliverance to the captives." The Vulgate has, *praedicare captivis remissionem*; but the Greek text has exactly the same words as the Septuagint, κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν, for which the words release, deliverance, which are in the Catholic version, exhibit, to our opinion, a better rendering than the word liberty which is the Protestant translation for the *dhêror* of Isaias, though, for the word in the passage of St Luke, the latter agrees with the Catholic version.

Sometimes the word indulgence is taken in Holy Writ to mean mildness, condescension, and it is thus used by St Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians,<sup>1</sup> τοῦτο δὲ λέγω κατὰ συγγνώμην, οὐ κατ' ἐπιταγὴν, for which the Catholic version has, "I speak this by indulgence, not by commandment," and the Protestant, "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." The word συγγνώμη implies an idea of condescension and almost of connivance.<sup>2</sup>

"Indulgence," as the Church understands it, admits of the combination of these two meanings. We give the name of an indulgence to a remission or condonation of a penalty due to sin, after the sinner has been pardoned; and the Church is inspired to grant this remission by her maternal condescension and mercy—by her compassion for our weakness.

<sup>1</sup> Chap. vii 6.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Judith viii 14; Isa. lxiii 7, 9.

Therefore indulgences are often simply named remissions—*e.g.*, in the *Decretals*,<sup>1</sup> in the letters of Alexander III, and in numerous other documents.

20. Cardinal Bellarmine<sup>2</sup> is of the opinion that the Church has borrowed the word indulgence, which means in her language the condonation of a penalty, from those laws by which the Roman emperors granted remission (*indulgebant*) to their prisoners of a part of their punishment. Baronius relates,<sup>3</sup> for instance, how, in the year 322, at the birth of his children, Crispus and Helena, the Emperor Constantine granted a solemn amnesty, *indulgentiam*, to all condemned people, except those who were guilty of homicide, magic or adultery.

The same emperor, urged by the prayers of the Donatists, had granted them the year before a similar amnesty, *indulgentiam*; he had recalled from exile those who had been condemned four years before, leaving it to God himself to punish the obstinate among them who had not been reformed by severity any more than they had been moved by the prince's mercy.<sup>4</sup>

Later on the custom was adopted of delivering prisoners during Paschal time. Valentinian II inaugurated this practice by an edict of February 25, 385, in which he ordered the judges to carry out what he himself was accustomed to grant (*indulgere*).<sup>5</sup> He excepted, however, malefactors whose freedom would have rather diminished than increased the public joy.

Some Christian princes went even so far as to remit to their subjects, on the day of their baptism, the penalties to which human justice had condemned them. They

<sup>1</sup> Lib. V, lit. x, *De Poenitentis et Remissionibus*.

<sup>2</sup> *De Indulg.* lib. I, c. i, p. 406.

<sup>3</sup> *Annal.* III, sub ann. 322, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* sub ann. 321, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Annal.* IV, a. 385, n. 38.

reflected justly that if in virtue of the merits of the passion of Jesus Christ which is then amply applied to them, God remits the neophytes all the pain due to their sins, it is not too much for a man to free his neighbour from all obligation towards the penal Code. St Thomas alludes to this rule of charity when, speaking of men recently baptised, he considers it as becoming for a prince to remit the penalties to which human justice might have submitted them.<sup>1</sup>

This kind of indulgence was also practised in the East. St John Chrysostom gives us the words of St Flavian, Bishop of Antioch, in a sermon preached before the emperor at Constantinople: "It was not enough for thee to have liberated those who were in prison and to have forgiven them their offences; thou didst cry out in thy heart, Oh! would to God that I could bring back to life those who are dead."<sup>2</sup>

The thirty-ninth title of the Theodosian Code treats of the pardon for misdemeanours; the third law of this title describes indulgence as the pardon of offences in what concerns the punishment prescribed by law only; the text that follows<sup>3</sup> calls indulgence sometimes a remission and sometimes an absolution.<sup>4</sup>

Again, we find in the Theodosian Code a special law on the *Indulgentia*. It related to an amnesty granted by the emperors, at certain appointed epochs, to those who had been condemned for the gravest crimes; whilst the Greeks also called this *indulgentia* a gift,

<sup>1</sup> *Pie tamen talibus princeps posset poenam indulgere.* III, q. lxix, art. 2, ad 3m. See Card. Lepicier, tr. *de Sac. Baptismi*, l. c, n. 7, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> Baronius, *Annal.* V, a. 385, n. 38.

<sup>3</sup> § 1. 4.

<sup>4</sup> See the remarkable work of Paul Canciani, of the Servite Order, *Barbarorum Leges antiquae*, Venice, 1781, t. i, p. 55; t. iii, lib. vii, p. 280; IV, Lex Rom. n. 28; l. *Lucius*, ff. *ad senatus-consultum Turpill.* l. *Indulgentia*, c. "De generali abolitione"; Ammian. Marcellin. l. xvi. See also the *Capitularies of Charles the Bald*, tit. 30, c. i, etc.

a divine gift—*δωρεά, θεία δωρεά*.<sup>1</sup> Examples might be multiplied; but those already given suffice to show how the Church might very naturally adopt this word, already in use, to express her own meaning in a higher sphere of action.

However little one may know of the origin of Christian worship, nobody can wonder that the Church should have borrowed the word "indulgence" from profane sources and adapted it to her own use. For the Church owed her development much less to the immediate destruction of the pagan institutions that had preceded her, than to their transformation into supernatural practices worthy of the holy and triune God.

By thus purifying and adapting the customs of the heathen world, the Church taught the faithful to sanctify even their most ordinary actions, and to make them promote the glory of God and the well-being of souls. She also showed the pagans what glory and honour they might give to the true God, and what merits and favours they might gain for themselves, by abandoning the worship of idols, sanctifying their actions and performing them under the supernatural light of faith.

If, then, the Church purified the pagan temples and solemnly consecrated them to God, as in Rome she did with Agrippa's Pantheon, where imaginary and even shameful divinities had been adored; if she instituted Christian feasts to destroy the remembrance of pagan ones, as for instance that of January 1, directed to make the new converts forget the abominable orgies practised that day in honour of Janus,<sup>2</sup> or that of August 1, substituting in St Peter's chains the venera-

<sup>1</sup> See Du Cange, *Glossarium ad Scriptores Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis*, under the word "Indulgentia."

<sup>2</sup> Martigny, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Chrétiennes*, under the word "Fêtes immobiles."

tion of men in place of the vain idols of stone or wood, to which homage was then formally paid;<sup>1</sup> if she ordered her ministers to adopt the garments commonly worn at that time by persons of distinction<sup>2</sup>—is there anything strange in her having borrowed from secular custom and even from pagan emperors, the term “indulgence” so well suited for expressing the remission of penalties that she grants to her children?

It is in this way that the words *parochus*, *statio*, *vigiliæ*, *sacramentum*—formerly part of military language—have come into our ecclesiastical vocabulary. On the other hand, the teaching of Christ, who came “to re-establish all things . . . that are in heaven and on earth,”<sup>3</sup> gave a new and infinitely higher sense to these and other words of the common speech, such as charity, hope, faith, chastity, grace and the like.

The Jews also had formerly their days of pardon and indulgence. Calmet<sup>4</sup> tells us that there was a tradition amongst them according to which the souls suffering in purgatory enjoyed a suspension of their pains on the Saturday in every week. In support of this belief they told how, some man having expressed doubt on the subject, a Rabbi showed him by perceptible signs that no smoke rose from his father’s grave on that day. The Jews considered their day of solemn expiation as a true day of indulgence. They were convinced that the numerous prayers they recited, and the works of penance they performed on that day, ensured to those departed souls a generous measure of the desired “refreshment.”

<sup>1</sup> See the *Roman Breviary*, Feast of St Peter’s Chains, August 1, text of the 6th Lesson.

<sup>2</sup> Duchesne, *Origines du Culte Chrétien*, c. xi, Paris, Thorin, 1899. Marangoni, *Delle cose gentilesche profane trasportate ad ornamento ed uso delle chiese*.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. i 10.

<sup>4</sup> Dissertation, *De natura animæ et ejus post mortem statu ex sententia veterum hebraeorum*, art. viii, t. ii, Venice, 1755.



### CHAPTER III

## THE PRISON OF LOVE

### *Indulgences for the Dead*

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends: for the hand of the Lord hath touched me."—*Job* xix 21.

The Church can grant indulgences for the dead—But indirectly and by way of suffrage—Double value of suffrages—An opinion held by certain theologians is rejected—The true doctrine and its consequences—Infallible application of suffrages—Consequences of this doctrine—Value of the sacrifice of the Mass—Gregorian Masses and privileged altars—The Providence of God with regard to the souls in purgatory—Conditions for gaining indulgences in favour of the dead—"Intention" on the part of the dead.

IT is a point of Catholic doctrine that indulgences granted by the Church may be applied to the souls in purgatory. For we are certainly in communion with them as we are with the saints in heaven; and, according to St Augustine, "the souls of the faithful departed are in no wise separated from the Church."<sup>1</sup> They help us by their prayers; and we, in turn, help them by prayers, fasts, alms, the sacrifice of the Mass, and especially by the application of indulgences.<sup>2</sup>

This is what Dante, referring to purgatory where

<sup>1</sup> *De Civit. Dei*, lib. xx, c. ix. Cf. the Decree of Leo X, *Per præsentes*, addressed to Cardinal Cajetan, then apostolic legate in Germany.

<sup>2</sup> Conc. Trid. Sess. XXV, Decr. *De Purgat.*

the souls of the just are praying for us, sang of in such beautiful lines:

In our behoof  
If their vows still be offered, what can here  
For them be vow'd and done by such, whose wills  
Have root of goodness in them? Well beseems  
That we should help them wash away the stains  
They carried hence; that so, made pure and light,  
They may spring upward to the starry spheres.<sup>1</sup>

For this reason holy Scripture warns us that "it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins."<sup>2</sup>

Indeed we read that "the just man shall fall seven times";<sup>3</sup> on the other hand "nothing defiled can enter heaven;"<sup>4</sup> hence the existence of a place of purgation.

Justice, therefore, demands that those souls which have not yet made full satisfaction to God shall be purified by the flames of purgatory; and as these are the souls of our brethren, it is just that we should help them to pay their debt, especially by applying to them the merits of Christ and his saints.

The application of indulgences to the dead is authorised by the Church's definitions and by the universal practice of Christians for ages past. When the pseudo-synod of Pistoja, imbued with Jansenistic ideas, declared that the application of indulgences to the dead was only a pure chimera,<sup>5</sup> the sovereign pontiff Pius VI censured the proposition as "false, presumptuous, offensive to pious ears, and insulting to the Roman pontiffs as well as to the feeling and practice of the universal Church." Now if this has been for many centuries the practice and belief of the whole Church, to doubt the legitimacy of such practice

<sup>1</sup> *Purgat.* Cant. xi, 31, *seq.* (Cary's translation).

<sup>2</sup> 2 Mach. xii 46.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. xxiv 16.

<sup>4</sup> Apoc. xxi 27.

<sup>5</sup> Prop. 42. Denzinger, 1542.

and belief is, in the words of St Augustine, to give proof "of insolent folly."<sup>1</sup>

2. We must observe, however, with St Bonaventure, that the souls in purgatory are bound to the militant Church by ties of charity, but not by chains of strict subjection. As soon as a soul leaves this world, it ceases to be within the jurisdiction of the prelates of the Church, and is immediately subject to the tribunal of God. Consequently the Church cannot pronounce on a departed member either a judicial sentence, or a formal judgement, or direct absolution; these are things which henceforth God alone can do. Still, the Church can help departed souls by way of suffrage: that is, she can draw forth from her treasure the merits of our Lord and offer them to God, begging him to accept them in favour of those souls, thus coming indirectly to the help of her children who are in purgatory.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ep. liv (al. cxviii), n. 46: "Si quid tota per orbem frequentat Ecclesia, quin ita faciendum sit disputare, insolentissimae insaniae est."

<sup>2</sup> It will be of interest here to recall the words in which Pope Alexander VI makes the Jubilee indulgence applicable to the souls in purgatory (Bull, *Inter curas multiplices*: Amort, Part I, sec. iii, n. 20): "Et ut animarum salus eo tempore potius procuretur quo magis aliorum egent suffragiis, et quo minus sibi ipsis proficere valent, auctoritate Apostolica de thesauro S. Matris Ecclesiae, animabus in purgatorio existentibus, quae per caritatem ab hac luce Christo unitae decesserunt, et quae, dum viverent, sibi ut huiusmodi indulgentia suffragaretur meruerunt, paterno affectu, quantum cum Deo possumus, succurrere cupientes, de divina misericordia, de potestatis apostolicae plenitudine volumus et concedimus, ut si qui parentes, amici, ac ceteri Christi fideles pietate commoti, pro ipsis animabus purgatorio igni, pro expiatione poenarum ejusdem, secundum divinam iustitiam debitarum, expositis, dicto anno Jubilaei durante, pro reparatione dictae Basilicae S. Petri, aliquam elemosynam juxta dictorum poenitentiariorum, vel alicujus eorum, ordinationem, dictas Basilicas et Ecclesias modo praemisso devote visitando, in capsula in eadem ecclesia seu Basilica S. Petri deputata posuerint, ipsa plenissima Indulgentia per modum suffragii ipsis animabus in Purgatorio

St Thomas explains with his usual clearness how this transference of suffrage takes place.<sup>1</sup> "An indulgence," he says, "may avail in two ways: Primarily the indulgence benefits precisely the one who receives it—*i.e.*, the one who performs the work for which the indulgence is granted; which work may, for instance, be a visit to some sanctuary. Now, the dead not being able to do any of the works for which indulgences are granted, it is evident that these cannot profit them directly.

"In a secondary manner the indulgence benefits him for whom others perform the works required, which sometimes may and sometimes may not be done, as we have said elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> For if the concession is formulated in these terms: 'Whoever shall perform such and such a work shall gain such or such an indulgence,' the faithful cannot transfer the fruit of indulgence to others, because it does not rest with them to apply to a particular end the intention of the Church, through which common suffrages (which are the source whence indulgences draw their whole value)

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existentibus, pro quibus dictam elemosynam pie erogaverint, pro plenaria poenarum relaxatione suffragetur."

In quoting the contents of this Bull, Mr. Lea (*op. cit.* p. 351) is guilty of four grave inaccuracies. First, he says that the penitentiaries had the power of granting plenary indulgences; in reality, they had only the power of fixing, for the tribunal of conscience, the scale of alms to be given. Secondly, he asserts that the penitentiaries could grant these indulgences to all the souls in purgatory; but the text proves that it was the Pope who authorised the application of an indulgence to the departed, and this not to all souls indiscriminately, but to those which the faithful intended to benefit. Thirdly, he wrongly supposes that the question here is of all plenary indulgences, whereas it regards only the indulgence of the Jubilee year. Fourthly, this concession is not caused, as he declares, by the suspension of other indulgences. See also the same Pope's Bull, *Pastoris aeterni*, v. Id. Dec., 1500, in *Amort*, p. i, 96.

<sup>1</sup> *In IV Sent.*, dist. xlv, q. ii, art. 3, q. iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Cf.* St Thomas, *in IV Sent.*, dist. xx, q. i, art. 5; q. iii ad 2.

are communicated. But if, on the contrary, the indulgence were granted in this form: 'Whoever shall do such or such a work shall gain such or such an indulgence himself, as also his father or any other relation detained in purgatory,' then this indulgence may profit not only the living, but also the dead."

Hence, then, for an indulgence to be transferable to any other than the one who performs the prescribed works, it is enough for the Church, to whom the dispensation of her treasure is confided, to give the leave; and she may give it in favour of the dead as well as of the living. The law of the Church now is that no person who gains an indulgence may apply it to any other living person, but all indulgences granted by the Pope are applicable to the dead, unless the contrary is stated in the grant.<sup>1</sup>

We need not at present face the difficult question of the mode by which the transferred indulgence is applied to the dead, nor the further one on which this depends—*i.e.*, how the sovereign pontiff can in this way deliver souls who are not subject to his jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup>

We will only speak here of what must be admitted concerning this transfer of indulgences. Are they profitable to those very souls to whom the faithful expressly intend to apply them? In other words, may we hope that the dead are by their means helped, if not with the completeness that seems to belong to the indulgence, at least in the measure determined by the mercy and goodness of God?

Further, as indulgences are only a particular kind of suffrage, we will extend the question and will treat of prayer for the dead in general, and especially of that

<sup>1</sup> *Cod. Jur. Can.* 930.

<sup>2</sup> See De Lugo, *De Sac. Poenit.*, disp. xxvii, sect. 5.



form of it which is the most excellent of all, the holy sacrifice of the altar.

3. We must admit, to begin with, that suffrages for a particular person departed are profitable to him more than to others for whom they have not been offered.

Formerly some theologians, amongst whom was Praepositivus,<sup>1</sup> taught that suffrages intended for some special soul are no more beneficial to that one than to others, but go to whichever is most deserving.

They illustrated this doctrine by the simile of a torch, which shines before the servants as brilliantly as before the Master for whom it is lighted, and of a book read aloud to a prince, which benefits others who may hear it as much as it benefits him, nay, even more, if these should happen to have better capacities. They said that the case is the same with the prayers offered for individual souls departed.

When it was put before them that the practice of the Church is to offer prayers for special souls, they replied that in acting thus the Church merely intends to excite the devotion of her children, who pray more fervently when thinking of their own friends and relations than when thinking of strangers.

But these theologians were looking only at the value given to such suffrages by the virtue of charity, and overlooked that given to them by their application to a specified person. Indeed all suffrages have a double value. One comes from charity, which makes all possessions common, and incites the faithful to rejoice not only in their own goods, but also in those of others. This joy, an effect of divine charity, produces in this life an increase of merits and consequently of grace;

<sup>1</sup> Chancellor of the Church of Paris, called by Alberic *Vir admirabilis*. Cf. Migne, *Dict. de Patrol.*, t. v. For the doctrine that follows, see St Thomas, *Suppl.* q. lxxi, art. 12.

in the next, where this increase is no longer possible,<sup>1</sup> it brings about a diminution of suffering; and in fact the more we rejoice over any good, the less do we feel whatever ills are pressing upon us. In this respect we may say that a soul which has more divine charity receives more fruit from suffrages, as it indirectly experiences a greater fullness of joy.

But side by side with this indirect value, suffrages possess a second value which directly benefits the departed soul, by the personal application to its needs intentionally made. For the satisfaction contained in this suffrage is then transferred to some soul named; and, as the satisfaction is ordained to remit the penalty, a suffrage transferred to a certain dead person has for its immediate effect the diminution of that person's pain, and not of anyone else. In human relations the payment of a debt does not benefit all the creditors indiscriminately, but those only to whom it is made; and it could not be otherwise before God's tribunal, as human justice is but an image of the Divine justice.<sup>2</sup>

4. However, some theologians—and even important ones, such as Cardinal Cajetan,<sup>3</sup> Navarrus,<sup>4</sup> and others—hold that the departed, who in their own lifetime were negligent in praying for the dead and in gaining indulgences, are not worthy to receive the application of indulgences offered in their favour; and, according to them, the same thing holds good of other suffrages. They quote, in support of their opinion, the authority of St Augustine and St Gregory. "Suffrages," says the former,<sup>5</sup> "are not profitable to all for whom

<sup>1</sup> See St Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, I, q. lxii, art. 9.

<sup>2</sup> St Thomas, l.c.

<sup>3</sup> Tract. xvi, *De Indulg.*, q. v, vers. quoad test.

<sup>4</sup> *De Indulg.* 22, n. 42.

<sup>5</sup> *Lib. De Cura pro mort.*, c. ult., cited in the canon *Non aestimemus*, 19, c. xiii, q. 2.

they are offered, but only to those who have deserved during life that others should come to their help." "We must note," says the latter,<sup>1</sup> "that nobody will obtain the remission of his venial sins in purgatory if during this life he has not merited it by his good works." Now, the Christian who has neglected in this world to pray for the dead and to make satisfaction for his own sins by gaining indulgences is not, in fact, one who deserves to be helped by his brethren's prayers.

But there is no need to accept such a strict interpretation, as we may understand the "merit" referred to in these texts in this sense—that the souls in purgatory, to be fit for the help of suffrages offered in their favour, must have deserved by their good works to be in a state of grace at the moment of death; otherwise the suffrages could be of no use to them. If, however, they are then in a state of grace, the suffrages offered for them will certainly profit them. Hence the above texts refer not to absolute but to conditional merits. What is really necessary, according to St Augustine and St Gregory, is that the departed Christian should have lived as he ought and died in the Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup>

If special merits on the part of the dead were necessary to enable the suffrages specially offered for them to obtain their due effect, these merits would be equally necessary for the application to them of general suffrages; and if such merits did not exist, there would be no means left of helping these souls, which is clearly opposed to the teaching of the Church and the belief of the faithful.

It may possibly be said that, according to this doctrine (of specially applied prayers), the rich are

<sup>1</sup> *Dialog.*, l. iv, 39.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. St Thomas, *Suppl.* q. xxxi, a. 2, ad 1. Cf. Mark Struggl, O.S.M., *Theol. Mor.*, tract. xiii, q. 1, a. 3, n. 33.

in a better condition than the poor, which seems opposed to the words of our Lord himself, who pronounced the poor "blessed" in preference to the rich.<sup>1</sup> "But," replies St Thomas, "there is no reason why the rich should not be in a better condition than the poor in certain respects, as, for example, in the expiation of sin. For, if they are so, this is but an insignificant matter compared to the possession of the kingdom of heaven, in which the poor will fare better."<sup>2</sup> The poor may perhaps remain longer in the prison of purgatory; but when they have come into their heavenly fatherland, their glory will be all the greater from their having patiently borne greater afflictions for love of the Crucified.

5. We must, then, admit that indulgences, and also other suffrages offered for any special person departed, are applicable to him individually. Such is the instinct of the faithful; and the Church, far from condemning, encourages it. For she approves and upholds the piety of those who have Masses said to help the souls of friends and relatives; or who gain indulgences for them, or who offer alms, prayers and fasts for the same intention.

As to "common" or general suffrages, offered to God by the faithful without any special intention, their application must be said to depend on the divine Will, as a determination on the part of man is here wanting.

Yet we are not to believe that all the suffrages offered in a general manner for the souls in purgatory are equally profitable to all. God dispenses them in a just but unequal manner, and their application, undetermined by any special intention, depends entirely upon him. Who knows whether this application may not be made according to the conditions required by

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Suppl.* q. lxxi, a. 12 ad 3.

the theologians mentioned above—*i.e.*, according to merits obtained here below by gaining indulgences and helping the departed ?

God, we know, does nothing without a special motive. On the one hand he takes care that the intention of those who make individual offerings shall be efficacious; on the other, he remains the only supreme administrator of suffrages where no such intention exists. He then distributes them according to the rules of his justice, enlightened by his infinite wisdom and founded on his supreme goodness.

6. But may one go yet further, and assert that the transfer of suffrages to the dead is infallible as to its effect ?

This is the opinion of a great many learned theologians, amongst whom are Suarez and Soto, supported by weighty reasons. Did not our Lord promise to his apostles that what they loosed on earth should be loosed also in heaven ? True, the dead are no longer here; but might not the expression “ on earth ” relate rather to the act of loosing than to the persons who benefit by it ? If so, the sense would be that whatever the apostles or their representatives, being themselves on earth, should have loosed or bound, will be loosed also in heaven.

That such is the meaning of our Saviour's words is shown by Leo X's letter to Cardinal Cajetan, which we have already quoted. The Pope there declares that indulgences are profitable to the dead and to the living: to the latter by way of absolution, and to the former by way of suffrage. Now all Catholics admit beyond doubt that indulgences granted to the living will infallibly profit them, provided all the required conditions are exactly fulfilled;<sup>1</sup> why should they not equally profit the dead ? We may, then, compare

<sup>1</sup> See St Thomas, *Suppl.* q. xxv, art. 2.



indulgences granted to the living and those conceded for the dead, as far as the fact of their unfailing application goes. The difference is in the mode of their application. Whilst an indulgence transferred to the dead profits them by way of suffrage, one that is directly granted to the living is applied to them by way of absolution.

What is here said of the transference of indulgences, sanctioned by the authority of the Church, is equally true of other suffrages transferred to the dead by private authority, the same reason holding good in both cases.

No recourse to the power of the keys is needed to ensure infallible efficacy to an indulgence transferred to the dead. The power of the keys is exercised in the act of dispensing the treasure, the administration of which belongs to the Church, and in dispensing it specifically by way of transfer. Consequently, the indulgence thus transferred receives its infallible application not immediately from the power of the keys, but from its own nature in virtue of the merits of Christ and the saints thus applied.

If, therefore, the power of the keys is only required to ensure the validity of the indulgence and the validity of the transfer, and not to make its application intrinsically infallible, then other suffrages—transferred to the dead by private authority—will need for their certain application no other condition than the intention of him who offers them. In other words, the infallible application of suffrages flows from the very nature of the suffrage as soon as it is applied to one specific soul.

This is why, when the Sovereign Pontiffs grant, *e.g.*, the favour of a “privileged altar,” which is in fact nothing but a plenary indulgence applicable to the dead on condition that the holy sacrifice is offered, they declare in their Bulls that they wish to deliver

from purgatorial flames the particular soul for which Mass is offered,<sup>1</sup> although these words must be carefully interpreted, as will shortly be seen.

7. We may now draw from all this the following conclusions:

If we consider the value of suffrages with regard to the charity that unites the members of the Church, the suffrages offered for many of the dead together are as profitable to each one as if they were offered for a single soul; for charity is not lessened—it is rather increased—by the fact that its action extends to many. But if we consider suffrages in as far as they are special satisfactions transferred to the dead by those who perform them, we must acknowledge that those offered for a single soul are more profitable to it than if they were offered for that soul and for others at the same time. For the effect of these suffrages is shared by God amongst those for whom they are intended; but as they have only a limited efficacy, each soul then reaps a less considerable personal advantage from them the moment they are divided.

Hence it is that holy Church very wisely desires Masses to be said, anniversaries to be kept, and prayers offered up for individuals, precisely for the purpose of ensuring them special help. Yet if to a Mass celebrated for a single departed soul she adds prayers for all the dead, this arises from her loving care. Whilst one of her children in purgatory finds his sufferings mitigated through our special suffrages, she would not have us forget and neglect the rest amid their torments, but would fain see them also have their share of help and consolation.<sup>2</sup>

From this doctrine we may draw a yet further conclusion. The soul for which one offers special,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ferraris, *Bibliotheca*, s.v. "Missae Sacrif.," a. xiv, n. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. St Thomas, *Suppl.*, q. lxxi, a. 13 ad 2.

besides general, suffrages must obtain its liberation from purgatory more quickly than the soul for which general suffrages only are offered. Still, after all, the delivery of the former will not be more complete than that of the latter; as, in fact, both souls are freed in the end from *all* suffering.<sup>1</sup>

8. What we have set forth is especially true of the sacrifice of the Mass, which is the most august of Christian mysteries. It is also the most efficacious of all suffrages for the dead; for "the sacrifice of the Mass," the Council of Trent tells us, "is the same as that of the Cross, the mode of the sacrifice alone being different."<sup>2</sup>

Theologians distinguish three kinds of "fruits" in the sacrifice of the Mass: the general fruit, which profits all the faithful, living and dead; the most special fruit, belonging exclusively to the priest who offers the sacrifice; and the special fruit, called also mediate or ministerial, which belongs to the person for whom the Mass is said.

The first of these fruits is unlimited as regards its object, since it extends to the whole world; the second is limited, being restricted to the celebrant; while, as to the third, some theologians hold that its value is unbounded, precisely because the sacrifice of the altar is the same as that of the cross, which latter, the Council of Trent again tells us, is of infinite value.<sup>3</sup> In this case the result would be the same whether the Mass is offered for one or for ten, for a hundred, or for a thousand of the living or the dead.

However, the best-established and truest view, in Cardinal de Lugo's opinion,<sup>4</sup> admits certainly that the sacrifice of the Mass, considered in itself, can

<sup>1</sup> St Thomas, *Suppl.*, q. lxxi, art. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Conc. Trid., sess. xxii, c. ii.

<sup>4</sup> *De Euchar.*, disp. xix, n. 245.

<sup>3</sup> Conc. Trid., l.c.

produce an infinite effect. But it also maintains that, considered in its application, this sacrifice is limited to definite and particular effects, and that it is by just this very fact that it differs from the sacrifice of the cross, whose effect extended to the whole human race, since Christ "by one oblation hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."<sup>1</sup>

This opinion is made highly probable by the custom followed in the Church of offering several Masses for the same departed soul; and by her strictly forbidding her priests to reduce the number of Masses to which they are bound, on their own authority, no matter what inconvenience they may suffer from having to say them all.<sup>2</sup> This view is further confirmed by the scrupulous care taken by priests to say all the Masses they have promised, and by the general conviction of the faithful, who are persuaded that the more Masses they can have said, the greater advantages they will gain. If, on the other hand, the fruit of a Mass were infinite in its application, one single Mass would satisfy for all the obligations of the world, would ensure to the faithful whatever fruit they might desire, and would make it quite useless to renew the Eucharistic sacrifice every day, as is now done on thousands of altars.

If, then, the sacrifice of the Mass is limited in its application, it must be allowed that when applied to certain souls in particular it is specially profitable to them in preference to others. Hence we must repeat with reference to the Mass what has been said above of suffrages in general, that, when celebrated for an individual, it profits him in a special manner.

9. Let us now more closely examine the Mass as

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x 14.

<sup>2</sup> Such is the tenor of the decrees of the S. Congregation of the Council, June 27, 1625, and November 23, 1697.

applied "by way of suffrage" to the dead. It is clear, to begin with, that the intrinsic efficaciousness of all Masses must be equal, as the essence of the Mass consists in its being the real commemoration of the sacrifice of the cross. But there are certain Masses that have particular efficaciousness from an extrinsic cause, that is, from a privilege attached to them by the Sovereign Pontiffs. These are the Masses called "Gregorian" and also those offered on a "privileged altar."

Tradition assigns the origin of the first to Pope St Gregory, under whose name they are known. This saintly Pontiff, as we gather from his dialogues, used great diligence in helping the souls in purgatory by his prayers and penances. It is reasonable, therefore, to infer that he has obtained from God a special power of intercession in favour of the holy souls, and that prayers and sacrifices offered in the place sanctified by him are particularly heard. This place is the present church of St Gregory on Mount Caelius.<sup>1</sup> The origin of the privileged altar is much more recent. The former Masses are celebrated either at the altar of St Gregory in Rome or on other altars to which this privilege has been given, and which are called for this reason Gregorian altars *ad instar*. The latter kind are said at certain altars enriched with this special privilege.

In substance, and as regards the main effect, there is little difference between the two. It may even be supposed that the latter is but an imitation of the former. To the Masses celebrated at either of these altars a plenary indulgence for the dead is attached. For in granting this favour the Sovereign Pontiffs expressly

<sup>1</sup> See the IVth Book of the *Dialogues*, c. xxxix-xli, l, lv, Migne, P.L., t. lxxvii. We shall say more about the origin of the Gregorian Masses, Part II, c. iii, n. 17.



declare that, on condition of a Mass being said there, the soul to which it is applied will be delivered from purgatory.

The sole difference between the Gregorian and the "privileged" altar consists in the fact that the Gregorian altar, besides the privilege of the indulgence, has attached to it the special intercession of its founder St Gregory, which cannot be counted upon for the privileged altar. In this intercession lies a special help, and perhaps the source of a kind of partial indulgence. Hence the faithful have usually more confidence in the efficaciousness of a Mass celebrated on a Gregorian altar, and the Popes, who make the grant of a privileged altar without difficulty, concede the favour of a Gregorian one less easily.<sup>1</sup>

The Abbot-General of the Camaldulense, to whose care the Church of St Gregory on Mount Caelius is entrusted, having asked the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences whether there be any ground for the pious belief that the celebration of the holy sacrifice in the aforesaid Church of St Gregory has a special efficacy, from the goodwill and acceptance of divine mercy, towards freeing a soul from the pains of purgatory, received an affirmative answer.<sup>2</sup> As regards the privileged altar, the disposition of Canon Law is that it can exist in every parish church at the will and declaration of the Ordinary, and on All Souls' Day every Mass said anywhere enjoys the same privilege as though it were said on an altar specially designated as privileged.<sup>3</sup>

It would, however, be a serious error if we presumed to state the measure in which the suffrages attached

<sup>1</sup> For the present law regarding "privileged altars," see Coll. Brug., 1926, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> 15 Mart., 1884. Acta S. Sedis, xvi, 509.

<sup>3</sup> *Cod. Jur.*, Can. 916, 917, § 1.

to the celebration of these Masses are applied to the departed, it being impossible for us to determine the amount of penalty remitted, whether in virtue of the Gregorian Mass or by the use of a privileged altar, or on account of no matter what other indulgence or suffrage.<sup>1</sup> It would be supremely presumptuous to assert that, in consequence of these suffrages, such or such a soul is delivered at such or such a moment from purgatory. For the objective value of suffrages is measured solely by the law of God—a law that is just and certain, but which remains entirely hidden from us.

This is what follows from the answer of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, dated July 28, 1840. The Bishop of St Flour had asked if by the indulgence attached to the privileged altar was to be understood an indulgence which immediately delivers the soul from all the pains of purgatory, or only an indulgence whose application depends on the divine mercy and pleasure.

The Sacred Congregation replied: "If the intention of the Church and the use of the power of the keys be considered, we must understand an indulgence that immediately delivers the soul from all the pains of purgatory; but if the effect of the application is considered, then we must understand an indulgence the measure of which corresponds to the good pleasure and acceptance of Divine mercy."<sup>2</sup>

Now, connecting the context of this answer with

<sup>1</sup> A decree of the Holy Office, December 11, 1912, makes the grant of the Gregorian altar privilege very much more restricted, and also implicitly declares that the privilege attached to the altar of S. Gregory in Rome and to other Gregorian altars *ad instar*, have a certain superiority over and above that of the common "privileged altar." (Theol. Mechl. *de Indulg.*, p. 102.)

<sup>2</sup> *Decreta authentica S.C. Ind.*, n. 283. Speaking in his work (p. 352) of the plenary indulgences in favour of the souls in purgatory by way of suffrage granted by Leo X, and particularly of one that this Pope granted in 1515 to the Hospital of St Saviour in Rome, Mr. Lea remarks that in these texts "no expression of doubt and no condition" implying that the indulgence "shall depend

what we have said above, we may conclude that our suffrages are infallible as regards the person to whom they are directed, but not as regards the measure or quantity of their application.

We may, then, say that our suffrages reach the person we have in view, but whether this person receives the full benefit of them is known only to God. Yet, we may rest assured that the indulgence is accepted by God in that quantity which the Church disposes; otherwise it would be useless to speak, for instance, of indulgences of one hundred or two hundred days as of distinct grants; and we may also believe that what remains of the indulgence unapplied to that person whom we have in mind is not lost, but is by God's mercy applied to another soul for its speedy deliverance.

Whatever, then, may be the suffrages offered for a particular soul, we can never be certain of its liberation, as a consequence of our suffrages, whatever they may be. And this is precisely why we may gain several indulgences for the dead, and have several Masses said for them, even at a Gregorian or privileged altar.

Let it also be observed here that if it is allowable to put over such altars the inscription, *Altare privilegiatum*,<sup>1</sup> certain other words that are sometimes found near some altars, or over the doors of some churches, are not to be approved—*i.e.*, "To-day a

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on the good pleasure of God" is to be found. But the tenor of the formulas habitually accompanying such grants, and the unanimous teaching of theologians on the manner in which the grants are to be understood, make it clear that it was not necessary to express every time what was sufficiently known as the current doctrine of the Church. However, the Indult of Sixtus IV, in 1476, which Mr. Lea refers to as the first authentic example of a plenary indulgence in favour of the dead, contains some significant words concerning this point, "Paterno affectu, quanto cum Deo possumus, de divina misericordia confisi" (Lea, *op. cit.* app. i, p. 585).

<sup>1</sup> See Beringer, *Les Indulgences*, t. i, p. 449, Paris, 1893.

soul is delivered from purgatory." By a decree of September 9th, 1603,<sup>1</sup> the Holy Office condemned this inscription, whilst allowing the mention of a "privileged altar." The reason is that, in order thus to announce the delivery of a soul from purgatory, we should need an absolute certainty, such as in reality nobody can have without a special revelation from God.

It was in the same sense that the Congregation of Indulgences ordered the tenor of certain hand-bills, which were distributed in the church of St Lucy del Gonfalone in Rome, to be changed. Instead of this phrase: "The soul [for which the Mass is said at some privileged altar] is delivered from purgatory," the following formula was ordered to be put: "Whoever shall have Masses said at this altar for a soul in purgatory will help that soul—*animae suffragabitur*," etc.<sup>2</sup>

From the fact that the holy sacrifice has not a determined effect as regards the measure of its application, we are not to conclude that therefore the Church leads us into error, by promising the delivery of a soul, on condition that a Mass is offered up on a privileged altar, whereas we can never be certain of this deliverance.

No, the Church does not deceive us. She does her full part in drawing from her treasure sufficient satisfaction to ensure the complete deliverance of the soul. Yet more, the sacrifice is applied to this par-

<sup>1</sup> See *Analecta Ecclesiastica*, III ann. fasc. xii, p. 460, n. 773.

<sup>2</sup> *Decreta authentica*, n. 154. We are obliged once more to point out the error committed by Mr. Lea when he insinuates (*op. cit.* p. 121) that the Church nowadays encourages doubts as to the effect of indulgences for the dead, in order not to diminish the number of Masses that the faithful have said for the departed. As a writer in the *Tablet* observed (April 17, 1897, p. 609), such an accusation ought not to have been brought against a society which is spread over the whole world, and which has been the inspirer of so many works of charity and self-denial, without at least some semblance of a reason to support it.

ticular soul in such wise that it would be immediately liberated, if the measure of the application did not depend upon the will of God rather than on the needs of the sufferer.

It may, then, be rightly said that the priest or whoever fulfils the prescribed conditions does deliver this soul, even though the total effect is not always produced. For our actions, as well as our intentions, are specified and classed according to their object, even though this may not always be fully attained. Thus, we say that a doctor cures illnesses, though the cure does not always immediately follow the remedies prescribed and sometimes does not come to pass at all.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is the sense in which we must understand what the celebrated Cardinal Augustin Valerio tells us in his book on the Jubilee of 1600, in which he took part (*De Sacro Anno Jubilaei*, 1600, Veronae, 1601). He relates (p. 76) that Pope Clement VIII met, on the Via Ostiensis, the members of the Society of Suffrage, who were making the visits to the churches for gaining the Jubilee, to the number of 25,000. Then, says the Cardinal, "incredibili laetitia affectus est, quam significavit benedictionibus quamplurimis: concesserat Clemens societati illi, ut pro una vice singuli animam unam a poenis Purgatorii extraerent [*sic*], extenditque concessionem illam ad omnes qui congregationem illam suffragii in illo sacro itinere sequerentur, et favit pro sua pietate sanctae et salubri illi cogitationi antiquissimo Ecclesiae ritu comprobatae pro defunctis orandi."

We must again, in reference to this fact, remark on the inaccuracy of Mr. Lea. He says that the Pope granted this privilege to the members of the association, and to those that accompanied them, on the spot; whereas the grant to the association had already been made, and the Pope then extended it to those who joined the confraternity in their pious procession. But, again, Mr. Lea assumes that each of the faithful who took part in this procession had received the power of delivering a soul from purgatory, infallibly and unconditionally. Now the words of Cardinal Valerio show plainly that they had to satisfy certain conditions; at the very least, that of prayer. "Favit . . . cogitationi antiquissimo Ecclesiae ritu comprobatae pro defunctis orandi." It is a grant of indulgence made in rather an uncommon form, but substantially the same as others. The faithful have no authority over the souls in purgatory; and indulgences applied to the dead must never be looked at independently of God's good pleasure.



If it should be asked why God remits sometimes more and sometimes less of the penalty due to sin, while the Mass is the same in all cases, it is a not improbable answer that the devotion of the celebrant may have a certain share in the decision. According to St Thomas,<sup>1</sup> the Mass, inasmuch as it is a sacrifice, "has a satisfactory value. But in the matter of satisfaction the inward disposition of him who offers it is considered rather than the amount of the thing offered; whence the Lord declared that the poor widow who had offered only two mites had put more in the box than anyone else.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, even though the offering of the Mass, regarded as to its intrinsic value, might suffice for the whole penalty, yet it becomes actually satisfactory—either for those in whose favour it is said, or for him who offers it—not for the whole penalty, but according to the devotion of the offerer."

10. The suffrages of the faithful, then, are the means appointed by divine Wisdom to provide for the needs of the holy souls who are suffering in purgatory, and awaiting the moment of union with their supreme Good, whom they love most ardently, yet with a mixture of deep sorrow.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theol.*, p. 3, q. lxxix, a. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxi 3.

<sup>3</sup> We must here correct another erroneous assertion of Mr. Lea's (*op. cit.*, p. 354). After having said that all the indulgences included in the *Raccolta* are applicable to the souls in purgatory, he adds: "This is perhaps natural, in view of the popular teaching, that God is impotent to release souls from purgatory before their allotted time without the aid of man—perhaps the most significant indication of the degree to which the Church has succeeded to the functions of the Almighty."

Catholic teaching has nothing of the kind. God has established wise laws, in the natural as well as the supernatural order, which will produce appointed effects, given proportionate causes; but, for all that, he has not renounced his right to put aside those laws when it shall please him. And so God could remit at once all the penalty due to a soul. If he exacts a payment proportionate to this penalty, it is only that his justice may be satisfied, and not through any impotence on his part.

Indeed these souls, whilst irresistibly attracted towards the sovereign Good, are kept far from him by the restraining bonds of their own unworthiness. Their sorrow is all the greater for the intensity of their desire, so that their life is at one and the same time full of keen bitterness and profound love. Grief and love torment them alternately: grief, because they are withheld from the object of their affection; love, because they long for him with such intense vehemence. They are like to a famished man who cannot reach the food that he sees, or to the thirsty and panting stag which cannot drink of the refreshing stream that flows near him.

“I do not think,” says St Catherine of Genoa,<sup>1</sup> “that any joy can be found to be compared with that of the souls in purgatory, unless it be that of the saints in paradise. And this joy is augmented every day, thanks to the influence of God on these souls, which constantly increases, in proportion as the hindrance to its action on them diminishes. . . . At the same time, they suffer from such an exceeding great pain that no tongue can describe it; and no intellect could understand it in the very smallest degree, if God did not make it known by a special favour.” St Francis de Sales, also, clearly sets forth how, with the souls in purgatory, the love of God gives birth to cruel sufferings: “Sometimes,” he says, “the beloved object is far off; and then love wounds the heart by the longing that it arouses, which, as it cannot be satisfied, greatly torments the soul.”<sup>2</sup>

To this intense suffering, caused by separation from God, is added the pain of fire, which, material as it is, torments the holy souls.

This fire does not torment those holy souls as it

<sup>1</sup> *Vita, etc.*, Padua, 1745; *Tratt. del Purgat.*, pp. 261, 262.

<sup>2</sup> *Treatise on the Love of God*, Book VI, c. xiii.

does our bodies. It does not burn them as wood is burnt in the furnace, for the spiritual nature of the soul is incompatible with material suffering. It is only when the body will be resumed that the departed will feel sensible pain, but then purgatory will exist no more.

The fire, then, being used by God as an instrument of his avenging justice, binds the soul, as it were, and so enchains its liberty by obliging it to remain where God wills that it should be, and in this consists a great source of misery for that soul which feels itself born for liberty and is unable to move.

There is then every reason for praising the great goodness of God, in having deigned to establish within his Church so powerful a means of helping these sufferers by indulgences and privileged Masses. It is not that God lacks other means for delivering his friends from the prison of purgatory: a simple sign of his omnipotent will would be enough to empty that dark abode; but he must take the requirements of justice into account. Now, thanks to the means established by him, his justice is satisfied "to the last farthing,"<sup>1</sup> for the penalty is remitted only in virtue of the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ and his saints; whilst the faithful on earth find, in the same institution, a constant opportunity of practising charity towards the departed souls by becoming, so to speak, security for their debts, through the performance of comparatively easy works.

Hence the masters of the spiritual life have always counted prayer and good works offered for the souls in purgatory as amongst the actions most pleasing to God. They even go so far as to compare them in some sort to the labours of apostles for the conversion of infidels. It is good, therefore, to foster this pious practice and recommend it to others.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v 26.

11. It only remains now, in completion of this chapter, that we should say something of the conditions needed to make indulgences applied to the dead valid. Besides the "just ground of concession," there must be a formal and express declaration from the Sovereign Pontiff. In the present law all papal indulgences are applicable to the dead unless there is an express clause to the contrary, as we have already seen.

Next, it is necessary for the person transferring the indulgence to a departed soul to have the intention of making such transfer; for the indulgences that he gains, being his own personal property, will not be applied to others unless he so wills. When he does so will, the good works cease to be satisfactory for him, since he has handed over the satisfaction to another; but their meritorious and impetratory value remains his own.

Lastly, these works must be penitential; otherwise there will be no proportion between them and the satisfaction required, and they will be worthless for expiating the penalty of sin.

Some theologians require further that he who does the works prescribed should be in a state of grace, just as he would have to be in gaining indulgences *pro vivis*. The reason for this is that, as in an indulgence properly so called the merits of Jesus Christ are applied through the good works of a man, if the latter is not enjoying the divine friendship, it would be presumptuous in him to expect from God the application of those merits to the souls in purgatory then and there.

This case is quite different from what results when the holy sacrifice of the Mass is applied, or when prayers are offered in the name of the Church by an unworthy minister. For then the value of the satisfaction springs, not from the personal merit of the immediate agent—

that is, of the minister—but from the dignity of him in whose name he prays or offers the holy sacrifice; just as an alms bestowed derives its merits from the master who gives it, not from the servant who distributes it for him.

Other theologians, however, whilst admitting that works done in a state of mortal sin have not an efficacious power of remitting the penalty of suffering souls—*i.e.*, in their language, have not a value *de condigno*—maintain that if these suffrages are offered by a Christian who, though in a state of mortal sin at the time, acts without any real affection to sin and by the movement of the Holy Spirit, we may believe that God will take these suffrages into account for shortening the pains of the souls in purgatory; not, indeed, in an infallible manner, but because it suits his mercy to do so—*i.e.*, in theological language, *de congruo*.<sup>1</sup> To conclude, we may say that, although the opinion which requires a state of grace is obviously the safer and securer doctrine, one may well hold the contrary view, seeing that no better disposition need be required for gaining indulgences for the dead than is required for the living, for whom, we said, it is enough that the last work should be performed in a state of grace.<sup>2</sup> A further indication in the Code seems to leave the discussion open. For Canon 925 § 1 merely states that no one is capable of gaining indulgences “for himself” (*sibi*) unless he is in a state of grace.

12. One final observation must be made with regard to the disposition of the departed souls in this respect.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Beringer, *Les Indulgences*, Part I, p. 68. On the history of Indulgences for the Dead, see the articles of Dr. N. Paulus, “Der Ablass für die Verstorbenen in Mittelalter,” in the *Zeitschrift für kath. Theologie*, Innsbruck, 1900, January, pp. 1-36; and April, pp. 249-266.

<sup>2</sup> Card. Lépicier, *de Sacr. Poenit.*, tr. de Indulg., art. 10, n. 8, p. 572.



Is it necessary that a departed soul should expressly accept the indulgences applied to it by the living members of the Church? No, a more definite intention cannot be required of the dead than what is sufficient for the living; and for these a virtual intention is enough.<sup>1</sup> The same, therefore, will suffice for the dead, whether regard is had to indulgences proper or to other suffrages—*e.g.*, to fasts, offerings of Masses, etc.

This is all the more certain, as the souls of the departed do not know, except by a particular revelation, what prayers are being said for them.<sup>2</sup> In fact, it hardly seems necessary for the dead to have even this virtual intention, as it is not immediately to them that the indulgences gained in their favour are offered, but to God himself that he may apply them.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See what we have said above, chap. ii, n. 10, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> See our work, *Dello Stato e della Operazione dell' Anima umana separata dal corpo*, 2nd edit., c. iii, § 10. Rome, 1901.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Castropalao, tract. xxiv, punct. x, n. 11.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TWO SOURCES

#### *Indulgences in Scripture and in Tradition*

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast; and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word, or by our epistle.”—*2 Thess. ii 14.*

The XXII<sup>nd</sup> Article of the Anglican Church—Holy Scripture not the sole rule of faith—Indulgences implicitly contained in Holy Scripture—A consequence of the power of the keys—Difference between the Catholic and the Protestant Churches—The descent of Christ into hell—Indulgence granted by Jesus Christ—St Paul and the incestuous Corinthian—Tradition about indulgences—The Church and the gates of hell—The exercise of a right and its existence—What is essential and what is accidental in an indulgence—Idea of development in the Church—Prescription—Two ways of studying tradition—Tertullian.

THE doctrine of the Catholic Church, as above set forth, is a natural corollary of various points of the Christian religion. If there remains for the sinner, after the forgiveness of his fault, a temporal punishment to endure; if there exists in the Church a treasure of satisfactory merits formed of the superabundant satisfactions of Christ and the saints; if unity of faith and charity puts us into direct communication with the Church triumphant and the Church suffering—then is it not natural that the legitimate pastors of the Church should be able to apply a portion of these merits to the cancelling of our debt? Is it not just that we, in our turn, should be

able to apply to the souls of our friends departed what we might otherwise have gained for our own profit?

But it now remains to be seen whether or not this doctrine is founded on the teaching of Holy Scripture and on early Christian practice.

The twenty-second Article of the Anglican Church formally denies this. It states that "the Romish doctrine concerning . . . pardons . . . is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God."

Before examining this accusation, it will be well to make an observation on the nature and on the grounds of doctrinal authority in matters of faith.

2. In the first place, it would be wrong to assert that the deposit of Catholic faith consists only in the truths contained in holy Scripture, and that these alone demand the assent of the faithful.

For, by the very fact that Christ has established in his Church a living authority, to which he has entrusted the right and the duty of representing him and of continuing his mission, it must be admitted that whatever the Church teaches and professes ought to be held and professed just as much as the teaching of our Lord himself. Hence it was that St Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, charged them to "hold the traditions they had received, whether by word or by writing."<sup>1</sup>

On account of their unwillingness to admit into the Church the authority of tradition in matters of dogma and discipline, Protestants have allowed themselves to be led into the most flagrant contradictions. In the sixth of the Thirty-nine Articles it is said that Scripture contains all that is necessary to salvation,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. ii 14.

so that nothing beyond what is found therein can demand the assent of the faithful, either as necessary to salvation or as an article of faith. But how are we to be sure of the authenticity of the Books of the Old and New Testaments? The same Article replies: Because the Church has never doubted their authority. But in that case there is something outside Scripture which demands the assent of our faith. What, then, is this but the magisterium of the Church and of tradition; a magisterium whose existence is clearly shown and proved by visible marks, easily ascertained; the magisterium of that Church about which St Augustine said that, without her authority, he would not have believed in the Gospel?<sup>1</sup>

That we cannot put aside the authority of tradition in matters of faith, Protestants themselves prove by their conduct. Whence comes it that they admit, as of divine institution, the baptism of infants<sup>2</sup> and the validity of baptism conferred by heretics, when Scripture does not mention the subject? Why, in their worship, have they replaced the Sabbath by the first day of the week, when Scripture says nothing to authorise the change? Why have they no scruple in feeding on the blood of animals, and in eating the flesh of animals that have been strangled, contrary to the express orders of Scripture?<sup>3</sup> Why do they hold as merely a "counsel" what the Gospel says about the washing of feet?<sup>4</sup> and why do they see only a metaphor in the words that order us to pluck out our eye if it is a cause of scandal to us,<sup>5</sup> whilst Jesus Christ said nothing to exclude an interpretation of his words in a literal and material sense?

<sup>1</sup> "Ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me catholicae Ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas."—*Contra epist. fundam.*, c. vi, n. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Art. XXVII of the Anglican Church.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xv 29.

<sup>4</sup> John xiii 14.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. v 29.

The thirty-fourth Article declared that every individual or national Church has the power of ordering, modifying, or repealing ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies established by human authority.

As a matter of fact, this is to attribute to tradition a far wider power than that which Catholics acknowledge as belonging to it. Liturgy being the expression of dogma, according to the well-known axiom, *Legem credendi statuit lex supplicandi*,<sup>1</sup> to recognise in every individual or national Church the right of establishing or repealing liturgical ceremonies would be practically to recognise its infallibility in matters of dogma—a privilege that we attribute only to the universal Church, in union with her Head.

Consequently, even though there should be no text in Holy Scripture to confirm the doctrine and practice of indulgences, we should, for all this, have no right thence to draw any conclusion against this dogma, if it be proved to have found a place in tradition. However, Scripture is not silent upon this point.

We will devote the present chapter to showing how the doctrine in the matter of indulgences is both indirectly contained and expressly taught in Holy Scripture. The proof from tradition—that is, the history of the belief and practice of the Church in this matter from the earliest ages down to our own times—will be set forth in the second part of this work.

3. In the first place, it can be seen that the doctrine of indulgences is indirectly and implicitly contained in the Bible.

To be convinced of this truth, it may be enough to remember in what the general notion of indulgence consists. We have said above that an indulgence is the remission of temporal penalty due to sin—the remission being granted by God to the sinner in con-

<sup>1</sup> S. Coelestinus, *Ep. ad Episc. Galliarum*, xxi.



sideration of the merits and satisfactions of Christ and his saints. This means, in fact, to say that God, in his mercy, consents to remit a man's debt because one or other of his friends has sufficiently satisfied for him.

Now such a merciful acceptance of other persons' merits, which God is pleased to grant, is attested by Holy Scripture in many places.

When God promised his servant Abraham to spare the guilty city of Sodom if he could find therein but ten just men, or when, at the urgent prayer of Moses, he delayed the chastisement that he had determined to inflict on the children of Israel for their sin of idolatry, he clearly showed that he was consenting to spare the guilty citizens temporal punishment in consideration of some holy persons' merits.

But we hardly need turn to such proofs in order to show how willingly God accepts the satisfactions of some people as reparation for the faults of others. It is true that he has sometimes punished whole kingdoms for the sin of one man, as when he struck the whole Jewish nation because of David's sin in numbering the people. But, on the other hand, how could we suppose that a God "whose mercy surpasseth all his works,"<sup>1</sup> and who is far more inclined to forgive than to punish, could set aside in the exercise of his justice, the infinite expiation of his well-beloved Son and the satisfaction of his saints, when asked to take these into account?

It is impossible. For if God is a severe Judge, he is also a tender Father. If he has threatened "to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, even to the third and fourth generation,"<sup>2</sup> he has equally bound himself not to leave the smallest meritorious work unrecompensed; so that even the glass of cold water given in his name shall receive its reward.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxliv 9.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. v 9.

<sup>3</sup> Mark ix 40.

We must then admit that the general idea of "pardon or indulgence," far from being opposed to the text of Holy Scripture, cannot be called in question without offering a serious insult to the infinite goodness of God, as is revealed to us in the sacred Writings.

The apostle St Paul bears witness to this belief in the communication of merits, when he writes to the Corinthians: "But I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls: although, loving you more, I be loved less";<sup>1</sup> also, when he says to the Colossians: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh for his body, which is the Church";<sup>2</sup> and, lastly, when he writes to Timothy: "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with heavenly glory."<sup>3</sup>

4. This consideration, based on the general teaching of Scripture, is enough to show how greatly God is inclined to remit the temporal penalty due to a sinner on account of the merits of his saints; but it does not prove the existence of such a power in the Church. We can, however, find a certain, though indirect, proof for this in the New Testament.

The Gospel tells us that our Lord said, first to St Peter and then to the other apostles: "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven."<sup>4</sup> In these words Christ gave to the first pastors of his Church what is called "the power of the Keys"—*i.e.*, the power of admitting men into heaven or of excluding them therefrom.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii 15.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. ii 10.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i 24.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xviii 18; *cf.* xvi 19.

Now there are two things—and two only—which exclude a soul from paradise: its own unfitness and the temporal debt owing to the inexorable justice of God. To remove the first obstacle our Lord instituted the sacrament of Penance; to remove the second another remedy has been similarly established—namely, that of indulgences.

If the Church can blot out the guilt of sin, *reatus culpæ*, and thus enable a soul to recover the friendship of its God, she can also free that soul from the lesser debt for which it has yet to satisfy divine justice—*i.e.*, from the *reatus poenæ*. If she has power to dispose of Christ's precious Blood in the forgiveness of sin, it is quite fitting that she should be able equally to dispose of it for remitting the punishment. To admit such power in the first case and to deny it in the second would be to limit the gift of God, to set bounds to his generosity and to diminish his favours. If we acknowledge that the Church has power to forgive sins, we cannot refuse her the power of remitting the temporal penalty due on account of sin, without involving inadmissible consequences and introducing flagrant inconsistencies into the Word of God.

This consideration is obvious and we do not think any doubt can be entertained by any fair-minded Christian on the matter.

In the work that he wrote against Luther in defence of the seven sacraments<sup>1</sup> Henry VIII acknowledged that the power of granting indulgences is implicitly contained in the words of Christ to St Peter and the Apostles quoted above: "Whatsoever you shall bind

<sup>1</sup> The title of the book is, *Assertio VII Sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum, edita ab invictissimo Angliæ et Franciæ Rege et Domino Hiberniæ, Henrico ejus nominis octavo*. Londini, 1521. See the article "De Indulgentiis."

upon earth," etc., and in these other words: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven."<sup>1</sup>

5. According to Mr. Lea, who may be said to represent the sentiment of Protestants on penance in general and indulgences in particular, the chief difference between a Catholic and a Protestant consists in this: for the Protestant there is no mediator between his soul and God; whilst for the Catholic there is the Church charged to take him, as it were, by the hand and lead him to God. The Protestant must treat immediately with his Creator; the Catholic has in the Church a tender Mother, anxious to come, as far as possible, to her children's help by means of the sacraments.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Lea in thus describing the position of the Protestant Church is evidently doing her bad service.

If, after the Incarnation and death of Christ, a man in a state of sin has no special means of returning to God, why was the Word made flesh at all? Of what use was our Lord's Passion? If man, when deprived of grace, can in his distress look for efficacious help from no one, what becomes of that "plentiful redemption," spoken of by the Psalmist? If the Church founded by Christ is not the intermediary charged with bringing man back to God, in what is she superior to the Church of the Old Testament? The Synagogue had by its rites some authority for justifying the sinner and for restoring him to friendship with God. If, therefore, the Protestant Church admits of no mediation between man and God, is she not avowedly placing herself below the Synagogue?

<sup>1</sup> John xx 23.

<sup>2</sup> "In Protestantism the sinner is required to act directly with his God. . . . To the Catholic, on the other hand, the Church is an intermediary gifted with supernatural powers through which it can supplement his deficiencies and assure him of forgiveness whenever he chooses to invoke its service."—Lea, *op. cit.*, p. 579.

Jesus Christ founded his Church in order that, by her agency and sacramental institutions, he might bring about the sanctification of men and guide them to their last end. In respect of the sinner, whose case alone we are here considering, the Church carries on her mission by exercising the power which she has received from Christ of remitting sins—both as regards the guilt with its eternal penalty, in the sacrament of Penance, and as regards the temporal penalty by the concession of indulgences.

In order to understand better how the Church possesses this power it is well to show how Christ her Head exercised it in the course of his mortal life, wherein we may distinguish an implicit and an explicit use of this power.

6. We have an instance of the first in the fact, mentioned in the Creed, of the descent of our Lord's holy soul, after death, into Purgatory.

Faith teaches us that Christ "descended into hell"—that is, that his soul went into the lower parts of the earth, according to St Paul's words: "Now that he ascended, what is it, but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"<sup>1</sup>

However, the soul of Christ did not visit in the same manner the various places which bear the name of hell. To understand this, we must first distinguish four different places to which the name of "Hell," which is an analogical name, is given by ecclesiastical writers.

The first place is the *limbo of the Fathers*, otherwise called the bosom of Abraham, wherein were retained the souls of the just, who, though having no more debt to pay to divine justice, nevertheless could not be admitted to the vision of God. This "hell" exists no longer. The second place is that called the *limbo of infants* who have died either without the means instituted

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv 9.



for the remission of original sin in the old Law, or without baptism in the new Law. In this place the pain of sense is not felt, yet its inhabitants are deprived for ever of the beatific vision in consequence of original sin. The third is the place of everlasting punishment for the adults who have died without God's grace, through some mortal sin on their part. This is the place which we usually designate by the name of "hell." The fourth place is purgatory, where those are who have died in God's friendship but have yet to pay a debt of temporal punishment due to their sins.

Now how did Christ's soul descend into these different "hells"? The soul of Christ visited only the limbo of the Fathers by its real presence, manifesting itself to the souls of the just and granting them the glory of the beatific vision, which had so long been the object of their desires, but which no one could ever enjoy before Christ had redeemed the world by his passion. The soul of our Saviour went down into the other "hells" only by the effect of his power, and that in different ways. We must except, however, the limbo of infants, from which the knowledge of the Incarnation is utterly absent.

To the damned, who are for ever excluded from the glorious vision of God by reason of their sinful state and for whom the passion of Christ was rendered fruitless, the soul of the Redeemer appeared as that of a severe and chastising judge, worthy nevertheless of their worship.

Now in what way did the soul of Christ visit the just in purgatory? By granting them a sort of indulgence. For it carried to those saved souls the consoling hope that their sufferings would soon come to an end, and that they would soon be admitted to the unspeakable joys of heaven.

Moreover, some weighty authors unhesitatingly

declare that many of these suffering souls, if not all, at any rate those who had had the strongest faith in the future passion of the Messiah, then actually received an "indulgence"—*i.e.*, that they had remitted them whatever remained of their temporal penalty, and, like the patriarchs and prophets, were admitted at the same time to the contemplation of the divine Essence.

It is in this sense that such authors interpret the words of Zachary: "Thou also by the blood of thy testament hast sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water";<sup>1</sup> and those other words of St Peter: "Being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit. In which also coming he preached to those spirits that were in prison: which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noe, when the ark was abuilding."<sup>2</sup>

According to some commentators this passage may be understood of those who at first would not believe in Noe's preaching, when in God's name he announced the coming deluge, but who were afterwards converted and died penitent. The souls of these, they hold, after having been confined for so long in the prison of purgatory as a punishment for their incredulity, had at last the happiness of hearing Christ their Redeemer announce to them the "plenary indulgence" that he granted them in the virtue of his Passion and Death.

7. But we have something more in Holy Scripture than allusions to the power exercised by our Lord in granting indulgences. We have an explicit proof of a direct use of that power by him.

Among all the facts mentioned in the Gospels,

<sup>1</sup> Zach. ix 11.

<sup>2</sup> I Pet. iii 18, 19, 20. Cf. St Thomas, *Summa Theol.* III, q. lii, a. 8.

there is perhaps hardly a more pathetic history to be found than the scene in which our Lord is described with the woman that had been taken in adultery. According to the Jewish law she should have been put to death, Moses having ordered that such a one should be stoned.<sup>1</sup> The scribes and pharisees knew this well, and brought the law forward to tempt Jesus. They knew how merciful the Saviour was to sinners; but would he venture to soften the rigour of justice in face of the direct command of the law? They therefore maliciously question him: "But what sayest thou?"

Then the just Judge, who knows the conscience of each of these accusers, unmasks them saying: "He that is without a sin amongst you, let him first cast a stone at her."<sup>2</sup> And straightway the questioners, condemned and confounded by their own consciences, take their departure one by one. "Jesus only remained, and the woman standing in the midst. Then Jesus lifting up himself said to her: Woman, where are they that accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee? She said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and now sin no more."<sup>3</sup>

Here, then, the Son of God himself, by his divine authority, remits all the penalty which this woman should have suffered according to the law of Moses. The Gospel history tells us of nothing more that may have passed between Jesus and this poor woman. But surely we may be allowed to imagine the abundant graces that the Heart of the divine Master must have poured into that repentant sinner. And at the same time we may also believe that he in his mercy remitted her all the penalty due to her sins before the tribunal of God.

Now when our Lord gave their mission to his

<sup>1</sup> Cf. John viii 3, *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> John viii 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 9-11.

apostles, he invested them with his own authority. Whence it follows that the apostles and their successors have the same power of remitting the penalty due to sin that Christ himself possessed.<sup>1</sup>

8. If from the example of our Lord we turn to that of the apostles, we shall have a still clearer proof of the existence of a power possessed by the Church of remitting the temporal pain due to sin.

In his First Epistle to the faithful of Corinth<sup>2</sup> the Apostle St Paul had severely reprimanded them for not having excluded from their communion and society a man guilty of the odious crime of incest. Making use of his apostolic authority, he had solemnly excommunicated the sinner, cutting him off from the company of the faithful, and counting it needful "to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>

A little while afterwards, Timothy, returning from Corinth, where he had been sent by St Paul, told the Apostle of the progress made by the Corinthians in the faith and of the happy results of his first Epistle to them. He made particular mention of the grief shown by them when that sinner had been cut off from communion with them, of the signs of repentance and compunction displayed by him, and of the desire felt by the faithful of Corinth to have him readmitted to their company.

St Paul was overjoyed at this news. He showed his feelings in a second letter, which he sent by the hands of SS Titus and Luke.

In this letter, as we know, he directs the Christians to relax their severity and to show mercy and kindness again to the once guilty one: "To him that is such a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Thomas, *Suppl.*, q. xxv, art. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. v 2.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. v 5.

one this rebuke is sufficient, that is given by many: so that contrariwise you should rather pardon and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. For which cause I beseech you that you would confirm your charity towards him."<sup>1</sup>

But the Corinthians had anticipated the Apostle's desire. They had already lessened the severity of the punishment, or at least were on the point of so doing. St Paul approves their resolve, and ratifies it with his full apostolic authority: "And to whom you have pardoned anything, I also. For what I have pardoned, if I have pardoned anything, for your sakes have I done it in the person of Christ, that we be not overreached by Satan. For we are not ignorant of his devices."<sup>2</sup>

Consider now the bearing of these words. He who makes the decree is "Paul, an Apostle, not of men, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father."<sup>3</sup> He has received from on high authority in the Church; he is truly "ambassador of Christ."<sup>4</sup>

Here, then, the apostle of the Gentiles, in the name and person of Christ—ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ—grants to a sinner who has given sufficiently strong proof of repentance, a solemn remission of the penance imposed upon him—i.e., exclusion from communion with the faithful.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. ii 6, 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. ii 10, 11. The Greek text of the *Codex Sinaiticus* gives the following reading: "Ὅτι δέ τι χαρίζεσθε, καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ὁ κεχάρισμαι, εἴ τι κεχάρισμαι, δι' ὑμᾶς ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα μὴ πλεονεκτηθῶμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ σατανᾶ, οὐ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὰ νοήματα ἀγνοοῦμεν," which is thus translated in the Protestant version: "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ, lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

<sup>3</sup> Gal. i 1.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. v 20.



This he does from a just motive—namely, fear lest the evil spirit should profit by the culprit's excessive grief and the pastor's severity, and throw the unhappy man into despair.

We have here then a practical case of an "indulgence," in the very sense in which we have defined it. We have authority in the prelate who grants it; a just and reasonable motive for the grant; and a state of grace in the person who benefits by it. We may, therefore, safely assert that St Paul granted to the incestuous man of Corinth a true indulgence, substantially identical—allowing for accidental variations—with those that the Church has granted in all ages.

And now let us observe further that the pardon, granted by St Paul in the name and person of Christ, must have freed the sinner from the temporal punishment due, *not* only, as Calvin maintains, in the sight of the Church, but also in the sight of God. For Christ, in whose person this pardon was granted, is the invisible and spiritual head of the Church, and by that very fact he exerts an invisible and spiritual influence on her members for the sanctification and purification of the soul. It must, therefore, be admitted that this remission was equally efficacious before God.

That this is the right way of understanding the pardon granted by St Paul is shown by the absurd consequences resulting from any other interpretation. For if the Apostle had delivered that man from his debt to the Church only, and not from that due to God, he would have dispensed him from the practice of penance and deprived him of the means of making satisfaction for what he owed to his Maker. He would thus have diminished his punishment in this world, only to increase his torments in the next. Would not

such a "pardon" have been a mockery rather than a remission?<sup>1</sup>

Such are the proofs drawn from the sacred Writings as to the divine origin of indulgences. They are of a nature to impress any man of good faith and upright judgement. But if this doctrine agrees with the general character of Holy Scripture; if it flows as a necessary and natural conclusion from authentic statements contained in the Bible; and if, finally, it can be shown to have been practised by Christ and by the Apostle of the Gentiles, then what foundation, what semblance even of probability is there for the twenty-second Article of the Anglican Church, which asserts that "such a doctrine is grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but is rather repugnant to the Word of God"?

9. Holy Scripture is not the only source of faith. Very many truths are not explicitly formulated therein, but are transmitted in the Church of Christ by means of the living word from one generation to another. This is what we call tradition. Its teaching is no less divine than that of Scripture, the only difference being that one is the written, while the other is the unwritten, Word of God.

This Protestants refuse to admit, recognising as they do, in matters of faith, no other source but Scripture. Yet, when they consent to examine the doctrines of the Catholic Church, they, in strange

<sup>1</sup> See St Thomas, *Suppl.* q. xxv, a. 1. The interpretation of this passage of St Paul that we have just given is the one usually adopted by theologians and commentators on Holy Scripture, both before and after the Council of Trent; and these authors are only setting forth, under various forms, the teaching of the Fathers. On this point readers may consult Cornelius à Lapide, Tirinus, Maldonatus, Cornely, and others. For Mr. Lea, instead, this interpretation is "a typical instance of the facility with which men read into Scripture whatever they desire to find there." —*Op. cit.*, p. 5, footnote 2.

contradiction to their principle, reject them on the quite gratuitous pretext that they are based on no testimony of the Fathers and no practice of the primitive Church. This is a most extraordinary mode of proceeding—that those very persons for whom Scripture is the sole legitimate authority as to points of dogma and discipline, should refuse to admit the legitimacy of Catholic practices—even when founded on certain Scriptural evidence—when such practices do not appear to them justified by the sanction of an uninterrupted tradition.

With regard to indulgences, if Scripture alone is a sufficient guide to faith, we need pursue our inquiries into their dogmatic value no further. Being founded on the Word of God, they henceforth constitute a legitimate practice. But if what we believe has to be corroborated by the tradition of past ages, then the rule of faith must be a double one, there being no longer one but two sources of doctrine: *Scripture* and *Tradition*.

True, these are but a twofold aspect of the one Word of God revealed to man; a double shoot from the single root of faith; a twofold statement of the same divine teaching. Scripture furnishes tradition with the elements of divine truth: tradition clothes these elements in divers garments, and presents them under various forms to the humble and simple.

Hence, even keeping to Protestant principles, we might consider the divine origin of indulgences as sufficiently proved by the scriptural arguments which we have adduced. Still, to complete these proofs, and to show more fully the harmony between tradition and the sacred Writings, we will gladly gather a few flowers from the garden of tradition and offer them to the Spouse of our souls, who made himself for us “justice, sanctification and redemption.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i 30.

10. The general charge of Protestants against the doctrine of indulgences is that neither from the writings of the Fathers, nor from the practices of the early Church, can any proof be brought forward in favour of the Catholic teaching on indulgences. Chemnitz sets this forth in the following terms: "No testimony of the Fathers, and no example in the Church of the first ages can be adduced to show that the doctrine or the practice of indulgences existed at any given moment in the Church before the year 1200."<sup>1</sup>

The accusation is serious. It amounts to asserting that by the introduction of indulgences at this late period the Church departed from the pure doctrine of Christ; and that she has undergone changes so weighty that she has ceased to be what her divine Founder wished her to be, and has, in fact, allowed error to take the place of truth in her teaching.

Such an assertion necessarily entails a conclusion utterly inadmissible for any one who believes in Holy Scripture.

If the doctrine of indulgences is erroneous and contrary to the Word of God, if the Church began only in the thirteenth century both to practise and to teach what did not form part of her mission and her past history, then we must necessarily conclude that on this point she has fallen into error and has taught heresy. And to say that the Church has taught heresy is to maintain that she has abandoned her Divine Spouse, and has fallen under the dominion of the powers of darkness; that she has made a compact with the sons of Belial, and that the gates of hell have at last prevailed against her.

This accusation touches the episcopal body all over the world, for nearly every bishop has exercised the power of granting indulgences to his flock. It touches

<sup>1</sup> In Part IV, *Exam. Conc. Trid.*

the whole succession of Sovereign Pontiffs, who have all—in the course of centuries—granted indulgences in one form or another, as Henry VIII of England justly remarks.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, it touches the entire Church, the pastors and the faithful, since the latter have always been found as ready to accept indulgences as the former have been to grant them.

In the position of Protestants, for whom the reformation of the Church took place only in the sixteenth century, to assert that the Church in the thirteenth century had departed, in the matter of indulgences, from the teaching of Jesus Christ, is to assert that for three centuries or more she had favoured heresy and tolerated error, at least by tacit consent. This is nothing less than to say that for three hundred years the Divine Spouse had abandoned his Church, thus failing in his own promise to be with her even to the end of the world<sup>2</sup>, and in his assurance that the gates of hell should not prevail against her.<sup>3</sup>

11. Let us now closely examine this objection. Suppose for a moment that the Church really had not begun to grant indulgences till the thirteenth century. Could we legitimately conclude from this that she had not the right to grant them? Because a power is not used, can we lawfully infer that it does not exist?

The question answers itself. The non-exercise of a right is no proof of its non-existence, any more than the mere use of a right confers a just claim to its possession. When a person exercises any kind of right, it is a sign that he either possesses it, or at least wrongfully claims that he does so. But, just as to make a show of power does not confer that power, so not to make such a show does not logically prove the power to be non-existent.

<sup>1</sup> *Assertio VII Sacram.*, art. de Indulgentiis.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii 20.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xvi 18.



Our Divine Lord was certainly not bound in any way, even merely as man, to pay the legal tribute to an earthly king;<sup>1</sup> for if the sons of earthly kings are exempt from such a law, how much more right has the Eternal Son of the King of glory to claim such exemption! Yet for our instruction he chose not to make use of this right. On one occasion he even made a prophecy in connection with his will to pay the tribute. "But that we may not scandalise them, go to the sea and cast in a hook; and that fish which shall first come up, take: and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater: take that, and give it to them for me and thee."<sup>2</sup> But in thus paying tribute, our Lord did not renounce his right. He remained none the less sole paramount Lord, beholden to no man, to whom "the sons of God" are bidden to bring "the offsprings of rams,"<sup>3</sup> and to whom "the Kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents, the Kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring gifts."<sup>4</sup>

Again, the Apostle of the Gentiles had certainly a right to live at the expense of those to whom he preached; but he preferred not to use that right "lest he should be a hindrance to the Gospel of Christ." He did not mean by this, however, to give up such a natural right; he even actually claimed it. "If others," he said, "be partakers of this power over you, may not we rather?"<sup>5</sup>

It is, therefore, clear that the absence of the exercise of a right is no proof that the right does not exist. It would be just as illogical to argue that a child is deprived of the natural gift of reason because it has not begun to use it.

Consequently, even if we were to admit that the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Thomas, *Catena Aurea*; Matt. xviii 26.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xvii 26.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxviii 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. lxxi 10.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. ix 12.

Church did not grant indulgences before the thirteenth century, that would not prove that she had no power to grant them. However, we shall, later on, inquire what is really the truth, historically speaking, on this point.

12. But before going through the ecclesiastical history of past centuries to look for successive evidence in favour of the doctrine and practice of indulgences, it is necessary to establish a distinction between the essential elements of an indulgence and that which appertains to their form only; between what must necessarily be found in every indulgence and what is connected with it only as an incidental accessory.

An indulgence is the remission of a debt, consisting of temporal penalty, granted by legitimate authority out of the treasury of the Church and ratified by God. This is what essentially constitutes the indulgence and is strictly required for its existence, all the rest is accidental. Whether the indulgence is granted under one form or another depends on attending circumstances.<sup>1</sup> The remission of a penalty by means of an indulgence is a point of dogma and consequently invariable; everything else connected with it is a matter of discipline and varies with times, manners and countries, according to the good pleasure of the Church. As regards both dogma and discipline, the Church is protected from error and is the pillar and ground of the truth.

In order to prove that the Church has always granted

<sup>1</sup> It is easy to understand that the nature of the indulgence remains exactly the same, whatever mode is employed to determine its amount and to fix the required conditions. Nowadays this mode is formulated by the pontifical decree or by the pastoral letter of the bishop in precise terms, and it holds good in all cases. In the Middle Ages, on the other hand, both the quantity of the indulgence and the conditions required to gain it were often left to the discretion of the confessor for individual cases.

indulgences, it is of course necessary to show that at all periods she has given a remission, valid before God, of a temporal punishment due to sin. But nothing more is necessary, since the Church was always free to grant this remission under whatever form it may have appeared good to her.

Now this alone is what we contend. To assert that in the primitive Church the practice of indulgences must necessarily have been invested with exactly the same form with which it is invested to-day would be an error, not to say an absurdity. One might just as well require that the faithful of our own time should practise penance as it was practised in the first ages of the Church, or receive the Eucharist with the same rites as it was received then.

It is on this point that Protestant writers make their principal mistake when they approach the subject of Catholic doctrines and practices.

In the system of the reformers man, as we said, is thrown back upon his own powers, is shorn of all supernatural and authorised means of direct communion with God. The Church is to him but an indifferent and lifeless institution, from which it would be futile to expect—as one would have a right to do from a living representative of God—a development of primitive discipline.

Such an error lies generally at the foundation of Protestant theology. It disfigures Mr. Lea's bulky volume on Indulgences in particular. This work of more than six hundred pages is a chaos of ill-digested materials, put together apparently with the sole object of discrediting the Catholic Church by representing her as inconsistent with herself in her teaching about indulgences. The very basis of that colossal work—which reminds one of the statue with feet of clay described by Daniel—is just this false notion

that the Church is deprived of all vital energy, and consequently that her discipline cannot be subject to development. This assumption gives rise, in our case, to a most unfortunate confusion between the essential elements of indulgence and the attending and accidental circumstances. It is this that enables the author to persist in asserting that, because indulgences were once not granted in the form common to our own day, they did not exist at all. From such a mistaken point of view indeed the most serious errors could not fail to spring.<sup>1</sup>

13. Those who refuse to admit the fact that there is progress and development in the discipline of the Church are only too numerous. They imagine that discipline is as unchangeable as dogma. They argue as though the Church had attained her full development on the day of her birth, when she sprang from the open side of our Saviour. They look upon her as being from that time to the end of her existence condemned to remain stationary and, like a corpse, a stranger to all the influences of the outer world.

But such is not the idea given by our sacred books of the constitution which the Church has received from her divine Founder. St Paul, in fact, represents her to us as a living body, which "by joints and bands being supplied with nourishment and compacted, groweth unto the increase of God."<sup>2</sup> Now the condition of a living body—*e.g.* of the human body—

<sup>1</sup> Thus Mr. Lea (*op. cit.*, p. 7) attributes to Amort (*De Origine, etc., Indulgent.*, Part I, sect. i, p. 32), the opinion that any canon prescribing penance infers an indulgence. Had he referred to the note placed by Amort at the head of this section, wherein certain penitential canons are related, he would have read that the author meant to take there the word indulgence as used in ancient times in the sense of removing a kind of excommunication; or, again, in that of diminishing the penance imposed by a confessor or by the penitential canons.

<sup>2</sup> Coloss. ii 19.

is that it passes from the weakness of childhood to the vigour of youth and the strength of manhood.

In fact the supernatural order is analogous to the natural, grace being founded upon nature and acting by similar methods. In every living body, physical or moral, we find a period of birth followed by a period of growth, this subsequently giving way to a period of maturity. But the completeness of the whole depends on that of its separate parts, and these last can only attain their perfection in virtue of their natural power of growth and development. Thus the perfection of a living being depends upon that of its limbs, which reach the degree of perfection proper to them only when they are as strongly developed as their nature demands.

The case is just the same with the Church. When her divine Founder established her, he did not give her that complete equipment of practices and traditions that we now find within her. He ordained that she should in the course of time, by the aid of circumstances, and above all by the assistance of his grace, reach the degree of development that he had appointed for her. It follows therefrom that, in speaking of the Church, we sometimes use expressions referring to her state at the beginning of her life; we speak of the infant Church, of the Church in her cradle. Again we use expressions referring to the state of vigorous youth that she attained to in the fourth century, when Constantine drew her forth from the catacombs, and she appeared before the world in all her radiant beauty and vigour.

Keeping these observations in mind, we shall easily understand that the Church, whilst maintaining unchanged the essential nature of indulgences, may well have made important modifications in the discipline and practice concerning them, precisely



because of the changes that Christian society has had to undergo.

It is this point alone that we propose to prove. The Church, we say, long before the thirteenth century, granted indulgences that were identical in substance with those of our own day; although the present form of their concession may differ from that used in past times. If we succeed in proving this, we shall be right in claiming that such proof ought to satisfy all honest minds admitting the authority of the Church in matters of discipline. They should conclude with us that, in granting indulgences, the Church continues to do what she has done without interruption from her foundation onwards; that if she teaches the doctrine of "pardons," it is because she has received it through an unbroken tradition; that, in short, she puts into practice the precept of Pope St Stephen: "To innovate in nothing; to remain faithful to what has been handed down."<sup>1</sup>

14. Nevertheless, in going through the history of indulgences we must take care not to promise, and our readers must not expect to find, any definite indication of the year and day when the Church, in the person of her prelates, used the power of granting indulgences for the first time.

A person possessing a right does not care about setting down in writing all the acts by which he exercises it. The recognised existence of such a right dispenses its possessor from the trouble of asserting it. And if nobody protests against the use of the right, it is only because no one can legitimately do so. The repeated exercise of any right, then, without opposition or contention from those who might be moved to attack it through duty or self-

<sup>1</sup> "Nihil innovetur, nisi quod traditum est," quoted by St Cyprian, ep. 74.

interest, becomes the most solemn proof and the most powerful tacit consent to the right itself.

This is what is called "prescription," a right to which both civil legislation and the canon law allow legal force. In default of written documents it is the only method of putting an end to discussions of early date, and in certain circumstances it even supersedes written declarations. In matters of dogma, prescription is of universal application, and Beveridge himself recognises it as a rule founded on reason.<sup>1</sup>

This is the rule that St Augustine formulated in the following terms: "What is admitted by the universal Church, and has not been established by Councils, but has always been observed, can be referred only to apostolic tradition."<sup>2</sup>

Now, if we cannot point out the exact date at which the Church first exercised her power of granting indulgences under one form or another, we can at least affirm that nobody has ever protested against the legitimacy of the practice or the existence of the right. True, we shall find the great Bishop of Carthage, St Cyprian, severely condemning the improper conduct of certain relaxed prelates who were granting indulgences contrary to the practice of the Church, without taking into account either repentance or good works. But this very protest is a formal recognition of the practice as being then in full vigour. St Cyprian could not condemn the abuses without acknowledging by the very fact the practice of the Church as legitimate; he merely exacted, as has always been done, the fulfilment of certain conditions.

15. Two courses are open to us in studying tradition on the subject of indulgences. One course would be

<sup>1</sup> *Codex Canon.*, Book III, c. ix.

<sup>2</sup> *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, l. v, n. 31. See also *ibid.*, l. iv, n. 9.

to plunge into the vast field of patristic lore, to turn over the writings of the Fathers, to consult the innumerable works they have left us—books, tracts, letters, questions, and so forth; and thus to compare all that they have said about indulgences with our present practice.<sup>1</sup>

But this course is long and tiresome. We must remember, too, that the earlier Fathers, like the inspired writers, never intended to write learned, systematic treatises, such as are used now for teaching theology. Further, they carefully observed the “law of the secret”—*disciplina arcani*—a measure of prudence rather than a formal prescription, suggested by the difficulties that beset the infant Church from her contact with heathenism, and which forbade the faithful to make known the Christian mysteries to all who came; for it is not meet “to give that which is holy to dogs, or to cast pearls before swine.”<sup>2</sup>

Whoever is acquainted, even slightly, with the writings of the Fathers, especially of the earliest Fathers, knows that in them the most sublime spirituality is joined to very vague and sometimes even obscure language, so that in order to understand them a commentary similar to that required for the understanding of Holy Scripture is often necessary.

We therefore propose in our study to take another and more clearly marked out course, which is also a shorter, an easier and a more direct one. This consists in following the practice of the Church in her discipline and her liturgy, as regards indulgences, from the earliest days of her existence down to the present time. This study will give us the key to the most obscure patristic writings. It will not only

<sup>1</sup> This is more or less what has been done by Amort in the work we have often referred to, *De Origine, etc., Indulg.*

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii 6.

cause us to live again with our ancestors in the faith, but will also enable us, by comparison of our own mode of living and customs with theirs, to distinguish accurately what is truly apostolic and comes from Christ himself from what are later additions or heterogeneous growths.

16. Before beginning this study we cannot refrain from devoting a few lines to one of the earliest Fathers, the one who best represents Catholic tradition on the discipline of penance and on the practice of pardons or indulgences which results from it.

This was Quintus Septimius Florentius Tertullian, who lived from about 160 to 240 A.D., and was priest in the Church of Carthage. He had received most valuable gifts from God—a vigorous mind, a vast memory and an extraordinary power of grasping the most difficult questions.

His learning was immense, and he could direct his genius with equal ease towards many subjects. Like St Paul he had originally used his talents and his energy in combating the Christian religion, and like him he had also been conquered by the overpowering light of Christ. He was over thirty years of age when he embraced Christianity.

Once a Christian he employed his zeal in defending the Church and her dogma. In a concise and vigorous style, peculiar to himself, he refuted Jews, pagans and heretics, but especially took to task the Gnostics.

In his work *De Poenitentia*, in which he endeavoured to set forth the true Christian idea of penance, he explained its nature and meaning, pointing out its extent and proving its necessity for catechumens and for any of the faithful who have fallen into mortal sin after baptism.

It is difficult to understand how Tertullian can have listened favourably to the absurd utterances

of Montanus and believed in the empty dreams of that heretic. How could such a genius give up the pure and kindly light of the Catholic faith to pursue the false brilliancy and proud illusions of the Montanists? How could he turn against his own brethren the very weapons which he had used for fighting heresy? How could he join the members of the new sect who boastfully called themselves spiritualists, whilst they bestowed on Catholics the insulting epithets of "psychists" or "animals"?

Tertullian, then, took to teaching doctrines the very opposite of those which he had previously upheld. He could not, however, withdraw what he had already written, whilst he was a Catholic, and this had been so conclusive that he had, so to speak, refuted all his own errors beforehand.

Henceforth he could only utter reprehensible words, for sound doctrine cannot proceed from a perverted heart. He wrote now, amongst other works, *De Pudicitia*, in which he again treated of penance and to a great extent retracted everything he had formerly written. With Montanus he declared that there was no remission or absolution possible for mortal sins committed after baptism, particularly for the gravest ones—apostasy, homicide and adultery. Whoever should be guilty of these sins must, according to him, be irrevocably expelled from fellowship with the Church and abandoned to the justice of God with no hope of ecclesiastical reconciliation. In order to support his own cause, Tertullian perverted the natural sense of the very passage of the Epistle to the Corinthians<sup>1</sup>, which we have cited above as the chief scriptural testimony in favour of indulgences.

This violent opposition to Catholic dogma led him, as a natural consequence, to deny the power

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v 1-6; 2 Cor. ii 6-11.



of the keys in the Church, and also the merits and satisfactions of martyrs and the efficaciousness of their intercession. He constructed for himself, after his own fancy, an invisible and intangible Church to which he attributed "the fulness of the spirit"; whilst he rejected the living, working, visible Church founded by Jesus Christ, whose operations are plainly to be seen, thanks to the office of her pastors and the efficaciousness of her sacraments.

The monstrous excesses into which these principles soon carried Tertullian are their own best refutation. How could the point of departure be the right one, when by following the road that starts from it one gets so quickly astray?

Tertullian, in fact, put himself in open opposition to the venerable traditions of nearly two centuries; hence his voice remained unechoed. It was an isolated and discordant note amidst the grand harmony of the Fathers. He was therefore condemned to remain for succeeding ages a witness against the errors that he would fain have propagated, for they could not blot out his earlier writings in which the Church possessed a public and irrevocable profession of her faith. It was a verification of the psalmist's words, "Iniquity hath lied unto herself."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxvi 12.



PART II

THE HISTORY OF INDULGENCES



## CHAPTER I

### THE SECOND PLANK AFTER SHIPWRECK

#### *Penitential Discipline in the Primitive Church*

“Therefore I reprehend myself, and do penance in dust and ashes.”—*Job. xlii 6.*

Classes of penitents—Form of the ancient Basilicas—First degree of penance—Second degree—Third degree—Fourth degree—Various classes of catechumens—Practice of the Western Church—Public penance not the only one in use—Administration of penance—Voluntary penitents—Reconciliation—To whom was reconciliation refused?—Penance public and canonical—Power of bishops over the latter—Further exercise of this power—Canonical penances and indulgences—St Fabiola—Theodosius the Great—The office of Penitentiary.

**I**NDULGENCES, as we have seen in the first part, are the remission of temporal punishment due to sin already pardoned as to its guilt but not as to all the penalty. They take the place, therefore, of any punishment which the sinner should perform for obtaining the entire forgiveness of his fault.

In order to understand, now, the mode in which the Church has granted indulgences from the beginning, it is absolutely necessary to gain an accurate notion of the penitential discipline imposed by the sacred canons for the expiation of sin, and rigorously observed from the remotest times of the primitive Church.

First, those of the faithful who had committed faults of a comparatively slight nature were deprived



of the right of bringing their offerings to the altar and of receiving holy Communion.<sup>1</sup> Those who had been guilty of serious offences, and especially of one or other of these three sins, idolatry, homicide or adultery, were excluded from the Christian assemblies; while others, still more guilty, were—at least in the earliest ages—expelled from the Church, and their names struck off the list of the faithful.<sup>2</sup>

But the various forms of canonical penance were not quite identical in West and East. In the West the faithful, who had accepted penance, remained penitents till their death. The Eastern Church, on the other hand, made her penitents pass through four distinct degrees, at the end of which she allowed them to take their place again among the faithful.

These degrees brought about the division of penitents into four classes, for whom distinct places were appointed in the Church. To understand these degrees of penance and the assignation of separate places to penitents in Christian assemblies, it will be well briefly to describe the form of the ancient Christian basilicas.

2. From the earliest ages of Christianity religious feeling, inspired by the holiness of its mysteries and guided by its liturgical rites, caused the faithful to give

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Martigny, *Dict. des Antiquités chrét.*, under the word "Oblations." Cf. also Mgr. Alessandro Magani, *L'Antica Liturgia Romana*, t. ii, p. 329, Milan, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Sirmond, *Hist. Poenit. Public.*, opp. t. iv, Venice, 1728. The interest attaching to the ancient practice of canonical penance has given rise, of late years, to a great number of valuable essays on the subject. As our object is to treat of public and canonical penance only in so far as may be necessary to understand rightly the practice of indulgences in the first ages, we purposely abstain from referring to all the various opinions of writers. The reader, wishing to know more about the subject, may consult with advantage the classical work of Morinus, *Commentarius historicus de Disciplina in administratione Sacram. Poenit.*, l. vi, cc. i, seq.

to the material structure of their temples a special form characteristic of their worship. The solemnity of the sacred mysteries, and the respect due to the hierarchy, required that the noblest portion of the building should be set apart for the sacrifice and those destined to offer it. A scrupulous feeling of delicacy led at that time to a separation of the sexes in church. Lastly, an entrance of more or less variable form, like a kind of *atrium*, reminded the faithful to collect their thoughts before entering the sacred precincts.

This arrangement is first found in an almost rudimentary form in the humble sanctuaries of the catacombs. It was afterwards gradually adopted in the numerous basilicas that rapidly sprang up in every quarter of the Christian world. In spite of considerable differences in architecture, design and decoration, according to times and places, we find in all of them the three essential parts, to wit: the "atrium" or *πρόναον*, the "nave" or *ναός*, and the "apse" or *βῆμα*.

The *atrium* was a court with a double and sometimes a quadruple portico,<sup>1</sup> situated on the western side of the building. In the middle of it was the fountain for the ablutions, the *cantharus*, round which was often inscribed the following line which reads equally whether from left to right or from right to left: "ΝΙΨΟΝ ΑΝΟΜΗΜΑΤΑ ΜΗ ΜΟΝΑΝ ΟΨΙΝ," that is, "Wash thy sins and not only thy face."

Before the *atrium*, at least in the great basilicas, stood an outer vestibule called *propyleum*, or sometimes *narthex*,<sup>2</sup> which took up the whole breadth of the *atrium* and had the form of a portico. It was called the "outer narthex" to distinguish it from the "inner narthex," of which we shall speak presently. It was

<sup>1</sup> This latter was therefore called the *τετράστυλον*.

<sup>2</sup> From the Greek *νάρθηξ*, *ferula*, so called on account of its figure resembling an oblong rectangular wooden rule.

supported by three, five or even seven columns, and was used for burial. Kings and princes eagerly desired the honour of resting there, counting themselves fortunate if they should become, after death, the *janitores* or guardians of the gates of the Lord.<sup>1</sup> Thus the great Constantine was buried in the vestibule of the Basilica of the Apostles which he had himself built at Constantinople;<sup>2</sup> and, later, Otho II, Emperor of Germany, and Offa, King of the Anglo-Saxons,<sup>3</sup> wished to rest after death under the vestibule of St Peter's in Rome.

Beyond the portico, and immediately adjoining the wall in which was the entrance to the basilica, there was a second narthex, similar to the first, and called the "inner narthex." This was separated from the nave by a wall, pierced with three—or sometimes five—doors, giving access to the church.

The second part of the basilica was the nave or vessel, *navis*, which, by its name and form recalled the mystical bark in which the faithful sail for the port of eternity under the guidance of their pilots. At first uniform, the "vessel" was afterwards divided into three and even five "naves." The middle portion was chiefly occupied by the choir, which was surrounded by a low wall, usually of marble. There the subdeacons and inferior clergy as well as the chanters were seated. The south nave was reserved for men, and was called *ἀνδρόν*, the north for women, bearing the name of *ματρωνίκιον*.

<sup>1</sup> "Quod enim imperatoribus sunt in aulis janitores, hoc in sepulcro Piscatoribus sunt imperatores," said St John Chrysostom, Hom. XXVI in Ep. 2 ad Cor. Opp. t. iv, Lugduni, 1687, p. 388. These words referred both to the tombs of kings placed in the vestibule of the church of the Apostles at Constantinople, and to those placed in the *atrium* of the Vatican basilica in Rome, where the ashes of "the Fisherman," St Peter, are preserved.

<sup>2</sup> Euseb., *Vit. Constant.*, Book IV, c. lviii.

<sup>3</sup> Armellini, *Le Chiese di Roma*, p. 728, Rome, 1891.

These two side-naves were themselves divided transversely into three compartments. The first was set apart for catechumens and penitents, and reached from the extreme west end of the church up to the *ambos*.

The *ambos*<sup>1</sup> were pulpits or desks of marble, very high, from which the deacon sang the gospel or preached. From there also commemoration was made of the faithful, living and dead; fasts, vigils and approaching feasts were announced; and all matters of interest to the parish and diocese were given out. It was also from the *ambos* that the new converts made their profession of faith.<sup>2</sup>

In the second division of the side-naves were the ordinary faithful. In the third, which reached to the apse, on the men's side, were those given up to the ascetic life; on the women's, the virgins consecrated to God.

The third and final portion of these sacred buildings was the bema, or sanctuary, which terminated in a semi-circle, whence the Greeks called it *κόγχη* and the Latins *absida*. All round it were arranged the seats of the priests, and at the end was the chair for the bishop, placed higher than the other seats, so that he could be seen and heard by the whole congregation.

Lastly, in the centre of the apse was the altar, placed under a baldachino or ciborium, supported by four columns. Suspended to the ciborium by a silver chain was the symbolic dove that enclosed the holy Eucharist. This dove was usually contained

<sup>1</sup> From the Greek *ἀναβαλεῖν*, to ascend, because they were reached by steps.

<sup>2</sup> St Augustine, speaking of the profession of faith made by the celebrated rhetorician Victorinus, says: "Ut ventum est ad horam profitendae fidei quae verbis certis conceptis retentisque memoriter, de loco eminentiore in conspectu populi fidelis Romae reddi solet ab eis qui accessuri sunt ad gratiam tuam," etc.—*Confess.*, Book VIII, c. ii, n. 5.

in a kind of precious pavilion, or tabernacle, hence called *columbarium* (περιστέριον).<sup>1</sup>

All these arrangements as to the form of churches are confirmed for us by an interesting passage of the Apostolic Constitutions, a work composed in the fourth century in the neighbourhood of Antioch. We there find minute directions as to the behaviour of the faithful in the sacred building, and the supervision to be exercised by the sacred ministers.

“When, O Bishop, thou dost assemble the Church of God, like the captain of a great vessel, see that the assemblies are held in all prudence and good order. To this end, order the deacons to bestow great care and decency on showing the brethren the places they are to occupy, as the sailors do on board a ship with regard to the passengers.

“First of all, the building shall be oblong, and turned towards the east; there shall be on each side *pastophoria*,<sup>2</sup> likewise turned towards the east. The building shall have the form of a vessel.

“In the middle of it is to be the seat of the bishop. The priests shall be seated to the right and left of the bishop. The deacons shall remain quite near, ready to fulfil their office and clad in garments that leave them at full liberty in their movements, for they are like sailors and those in command on each side of the vessel. They shall see that the laity take their places in the other part of the church without tumult, and

<sup>1</sup> See Martigny, *Diction. des Antiquités chrétiennes*, passim. Should a more detailed description of the form and arrangement of the ancient Christian basilicas be desired, the reader may consult Ciampini, *Vetera Monumenta*, Part I, c. ii, in which the learned archæologist describes with great exactness the Basilica of St Clement in Rome. He gives the plan of it, and also the arrangement of the choir (Rome, 1690, pp. 12 seq.).

<sup>2</sup> Large tabernacles in the form of cupboards, or even of sacristies. The precious objects belonging to the church, such as the sacred vessels, the liturgical books and sometimes even the Holy Eucharist, were kept in the *pastophoria*.



in good order. The women likewise shall be seated on their own side, and shall abstain from talking. In the midst, the lector standing on a higher place.

“The porters shall remain at the doors, on the side of the men, to superintend them; the deaconesses on the side of the women; they are like those who take the passengers’ fares for the voyage. . . . Any one found out of his place shall be reproved by the deacon, who fills the office of pilot, and taken back to the place that belongs to him. . . . Let the deacon superintend the seating of the people, so that each person who enters shall go at once to occupy his place, and that nobody stops at the entrance. Let also the deacon watch the people, so that no one murmurs, no one sleeps and no one laughs or makes signs. For we must behave in church with wisdom, respect and watchfulness, our ears being attentive to the Word of God.”<sup>1</sup> Some of these wise directions would not be out of place even at the present day.

3. The penitents, as we have said, were divided into four classes. The first consisted of those among the faithful to whom entry into the Church was forbidden. They were condemned to remain without the sacred building, or even outside the atrium, and remained in the exterior narthex during the celebration of the holy mysteries. They wore mourning garments, and put on sackcloth or haircloth as a sign of penance. Their hair was in disorder and covered with ashes.

In this dismal attire these penitents made public confession of their sins, and asked the faithful as they entered the church to beg pardon of God for them. Often did they join tears to their penances and supplications, whence they were called the “weepers,”

<sup>1</sup> *Constit. Apost.*, l. ii, c. lvii; ap. Migne, *P.G.*, t. i, pp. 410 seq.

*flentes*; and their degree of penance was named *πρόσκλησις*, "lamentation." Sometimes they knelt down as the faithful passed and kissed their feet, entreating them to plead with the bishop that he might admit them among the Church's penitents; for the weepers were rather candidates for penance than actual penitents.

This first stage of penance varied as to duration. Sometimes it lasted several years.

4. The second degree was the lowest class of penitents properly so called. They were those whom the bishop, at the request of deacons and people, had raised from their hard and humiliating condition outside the church, and admitted to follow the regular course of canonical reinstatement.

These penitents had their place in the inner narthex, and were thus separated by a wall from the rest of the people. As they had no communication with the church except by the doors of the narthex, they could see nothing of what passed in the assembly. But they could hear the reading of Holy Scripture, the Homilies and the addresses of the sacred ministers.

This place was the one specially reserved for catechumens. However access to it was often allowed to Jews, heretics, schismatics and pagans in order that by this means they might hear the word of God, which is the first step towards a sincere conversion. This degree of penance was called *ἀκρόασις*, "hearing," and the penitents belonging to this class went by the name of *audientes*, "hearers."

When the reading and instructions were finished, the deacon ordered "the hearers and infidels to retire," the word infidel here meaning the unbaptised.

It would be difficult to say how much the penitents felt this humiliation. On the one hand, the order that they should attend the instructions seemed to

imply that they were ignorant of the most elementary Christian doctrine; on the other, their being sent away directly these were over, reminded them that, in punishment of their offences, they were reduced to the rank of those who had not even received the sacrament of regeneration.

5. When the penitents had spent a number of years, corresponding to the gravity of their sins, in the rank of "hearers," they were once more admitted to a place in the Church, and thus entered on the third degree of penance. The penitents of this class occupied the lowest place in the sacred building, between the entrance and the ambos.

After the departure of the "hearers," they prostrated themselves on the ground, weeping and groaning, whilst the faithful united in their grief. Then they rose; the bishop, standing, imposed his hands upon them and said over them certain prayers, after which they received an order from the deacon to retire from amidst the faithful, which order also applied to those of the catechumens who went by the same name. This name was *prostrati*, or *genuflectentes*, "prostrates," or "kneelers"; and their degree of penance was called *ὑπόπτωσις*, prostration. During this period of penance they had to undergo a course of prayers, fasts and other practices of mortification.

6. After them came the last of the penitents, called *consistentes*, or "standers." They were allowed to remain in the church throughout the whole liturgical service; but they might not receive the holy Eucharist or make any offering towards the celebration of the holy Sacrifice or the maintenance of divine worship, as was the custom among the rest of the faithful. Their degree was known by the word *σύστασις*, literally "standing up with the rest."

St Gregory Thaumaturgus, Bishop of Neo-Cæsarea,

has left us an exact description of these four degrees of penance. In the course of an invasion of barbarians in the country of Pontus, towards the year 263, many of the faithful had been led into eating meats offered to idols (*idolothyta*). Consulted as to what penance the culprits must do in order to be re-admitted to Church membership, the holy bishop replied by a canonical letter, in which the following passage occurs: "The lamentation is outside the door of the temple; there the sinner stays to recommend himself to the prayers of the faithful as they enter the holy place. The hearing is within, in the narthex; he who has sinned must remain there until the exit of the catechumens, and then go out. The prostration consists in the sinner being admitted inside the doors of the church, which he must again leave at the same time as the catechumens. The station is the state of him who takes part with the faithful in the service, and does not go out with the catechumens. Lastly comes participation in the mysteries."<sup>1</sup>

7. We have several times mentioned the catechumens together with the penitents. This is because the "Catechumenate," which regularly lasted for two years, when the candidates behaved well, included three classes.

The first was that of hearers, *audientes*, who, on announcing that they wished to become Christians, had received from the bishop imposition of hands and the sign of the cross on their foreheads. They were instructed on the commandments, on the principal truths of the Old and New Testament—especially on the life, death and resurrection of our Saviour, the foundation of the Church, and the Last Things. It

<sup>1</sup> Can. 11. On the authenticity of this canon, see Natalis Alexander, Diss. xviii in Saec. iii. Cf. Ciampini, *Vet. Mon.*, Part I, c. ii, Romae, 1590.

was for the instruction of this class of catechumens that St Augustine wrote his treatise *De catechizandis rudibus*.

From this first degree the catechumens passed on to that of *prostrati*, also called *genuflectentes*; or again, *orantes*. They were then allowed to be present at certain liturgical prayers, after which they had to retire when the deacon said, "Exite, catechumeni!" This was called the "dismissal of the catechumens," *Missa Catechumenorum*.

The more advanced class were called *competentes*. They were especially taught the mystery of the Holy Trinity, doctrines on the Church and the remission of sins. It was only a short time before baptism that they were taught the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Hence, at the liturgical services in which catechumens were allowed to take part, the faithful said these two formulas privately;<sup>1</sup> and a vestige of this custom still remains in the choral recitation of Divine Office, when the Creed and "Pater" are said "secretly."

At the beginning of Lent the catechumens who wished to be baptised at Easter gave their names in writing, by which they contracted a closer obligation of faithfulness and submission to the Church. From that time they were called *electi*; and until Easter they had to practise penance, wear the hair-shirt, fast and observe continence. Before receiving baptism they confessed their sins in the presence of the bishop. Thus Constantine, whilst he was at Helenopolis, and a little while before he received baptism at Nicomedia, prostrated himself in the Temple, *in ipso martyrio*, and with great fervour begged God to forgive his sins, which he humbly confessed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See among other authors, Martigny, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités chrétiennes*, under the word "Catéchumènes"; Armellini, *Lezioni di Archeologia Cristiana*, pp. 278 seq., Rome, 1898; Magani, *L'Antica Liturgia Romana*, t. ii, p. 312; t. iii, pp. 209, 210.

<sup>2</sup> Euseb. Caesar., *Vita Const.*, Book II, c. 614.



The last preparation before baptism was the "scrutiny." This was the name given to the exorcism that was performed seven times, on appointed days, over the catechumens. The "elect" stood upright, with head uncovered, bare feet resting on a hair-shirt and eyes raised to heaven. The exorcists began by breathing thrice on his face; then the priest touched his ears and nostrils with saliva and put a little salt in his mouth. Thus prepared, the catechumen was ready to receive, on the night preceding Easter day, baptism or "the seal of Christ," *signaculum Christi*, which gave full remission of his sins, or the "indulgence," as baptism itself sometimes was called.<sup>1</sup>

8. It must be noted that the four degrees of penance, as here described, were practised in the East only. And even in the Eastern Churches, it is a question among learned writers whether these degrees were ever a universal institution.<sup>2</sup> But, if the administration of penitential discipline in the West never included such an elaborate organisation, its importance was not lessened on this account. For here "penance" constituted a permanent state; and therefore the re-admission to public penance is found much earlier in the East than in the West.

But, in both East and West, the Church considered it necessary to impose severe penance on sinners, whose public offences dishonoured the name of Christian, and were an offence to the community of

<sup>1</sup> Concil. Carthag. apud S. Cypr. n. xix, p. 324. See Martigny, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités chrétiennes*, under the word "Catéchumènes." See above, Part I, c. i, n. 10. The terminology we have used in order to express the different stages of the Catechumenate is certainly of very ancient use. But many scholars are of opinion that these terms do not necessarily indicate the existence of separate well-recognised groups or degrees. Cf. G. Bareille, *Dict. Theol.*, vol. ii, col. 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrétien*. Paris, 1889, chap. xv, p. 42; the author, in a note, quotes Funk, *Theol. Quartalschrift*, 1866, pp. 373 seq.

believers. Such penance was made the condition of their being readmitted to her fold, and of their returning to the sacraments and to a share in all the spiritual blessings bestowed on them through baptism. The petition for reinstatement—in other words, for admission to the state of penance—was not granted without difficulty; and it was the ordinary rule to admit nobody to penance more than once in a lifetime.

Often, too, canonical penance and reconciliation were only granted on certain conditions. In his decretal to Victricius of Rouen (February 15, 404), Pope Innocent I says that a woman who had married another man during her husband's lifetime could not be admitted to penance till after the death of one or other of the two men. He also decrees that any virgin consecrated to God who, after having received the veil from the bishop's hand, should marry, even privately, may not be admitted to canonical penance except on the death of the man she had married. The Church, therefore, counted admission to canonical penance a great benefit, which she did not grant indiscriminately.

The first consequence of being admitted to the state of penance was the giving up of public offices, and of the ecclesiastical or military state.<sup>1</sup> Neither could penitents marry; and, if already married, they had to live as though celibate. Men shaved their hair and beard; women received the veil of penance. The penitents of both sexes had to give alms, and had to abstain from the enjoyments allowed to other Christians. They were also bound to be diligent in attending, in the degree that their condition allowed, at divine service, and, in short, had to live in the world as if real monks or nuns.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Thomas, II-II, q. clxxxviii, a. 3, ad 3, quotes this rule of the *Decretals*: "Contrarium omnino est ecclesiasticis regulis post poenitentiae actionem redire ad militiam saecularem." *De Poenit.*, dist. V, c. iii.

At that period, however, the monastic state was itself one of penance. The only difference between monks and canonical "penitents" was that the former had voluntarily adopted the state, whilst the latter were obliged to accept it if they wished to be admitted again in the Church. The monk could receive Holy Orders, the penitent proper could not.

The faithful, on their own part, were firmly convinced that penance, willingly accepted, was a pledge of reconciliation with God and a promise of eternal life. This is well shown by the following beautiful inscription:<sup>1</sup>

HIC IN PACE QUIESCIT  
 ADJUTOR QUI POST  
 ACCEPTAM POENITENTIAM  
 MIGRAVIT AD DOMINUM  
 ANN. LXV MENSES VII DIES XV  
 DEPOSITUS S. D. IV KAL. JANUARIAS  
 ANASTASIO V. C. CONSULE

As long as early Christian fervour lasted, extreme attention was not paid to exact forms and rules in the administration of canonical penance. But in the third century the Church was compelled to make it the subject of regular legislation.

Novatus, priest of the Church of Carthage, and Novatian, deacon of the Roman Church, relying on an inaccurate interpretation of a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews,<sup>2</sup> where St Paul severely reproves those who have fallen again into sin after baptism, had been teaching that those who had lost baptismal innocence could find no remedy in penance. To protest against this error, the Roman Church formulated the liturgical rules to be followed in the administration of penance.

<sup>1</sup> Armellini, *Lezioni di Archeologia Cristiana*, p. 552.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. vi 4-6.

Long before this, the faithful had been in the habit of preparing themselves for the Easter festival by the fast of Lent, "Quadragesima." In many Churches, the fast of the earlier weeks was but a preparation for the much more rigorous fast, by which they sanctified Holy Week and made ready for Easter. Only dry food was allowed in this fast, which on that account was called *Xerophagy*.

Custom greatly varied in the different Churches with regard to the fast of Lent; but, in every case, it greatly exceeded what is now done in point of severity. As to its length it is difficult to make any precise statement, since it varied with the particular Churches, from seven to eight or even nine weeks. In the West four complementary days were added, evidently to make up the mystic number of forty days' fast, since Sunday is never a fast day. This addition seems to have been made shortly before the Pontificate of St Gregory.<sup>1</sup>

The first day of Lent, which we now call "Ash-Wednesday," and which was then called "the beginning of the fast,"—*caput jejunii* or *quadragesimae*,<sup>2</sup> was the day fixed for the imposition of public penance. For some time before this, and particularly from Septuagesima Sunday, the penitents had been preparing to receive public penance by confessing their sins, that is, by receiving the sacrament of penance.<sup>3</sup> In Eng-

<sup>1</sup> See the study on Lent published by Father Thurston, S.J., in the *Month*, April, 1895, p. 552. See also the *Peregrinatio Sylviæ*, which gives interesting details on the fast of Lent at Jerusalem towards the end of the fourth century.

<sup>2</sup> In the Middle Ages they called Shrove Tuesday "caresmentrant," "caresmeprenant," hence the Latin of the period "cararementrannus." See Du Cange s.v. *Carena*; E. Vacandard, *Dict. Theol.*, ii, col. 1724.

<sup>3</sup> In the numerous manuscripts of the *Admonitio synodalis* which Don Morin has published, attributing it to St Caesarius of Arles, it is ordered that on the Wednesday before Quadragesima

land the period between Septuagesima and Ash-Wednesday used to be called *Shrovetide*, i.e., time of confession or accusation.<sup>1</sup>

At first, the penitents were allowed to live in their own houses without being bound to any kind of seclusion or "surveillance." But in the middle of the fifth century they began to be shut up in monasteries for the whole of Lent, and only came out on Maundy Thursday—the day of public reconciliation for those whose term of penance was completed.<sup>2</sup>

On Ash-Wednesday a priest solemnly clothed them with the symbolical sackcloth or hair-shirt, various prayers being said over them at the same time. Later, the custom was introduced of spreading ashes on the head of penitents who submitted to public penance. But this ceremony was distinct from the blessing and imposition of ashes as practised now in the case of all the faithful, though no doubt the present usage is derived from the above ancient custom. "This pious practice, which, perhaps, was begun through humility in some monastery, ended by becoming part of the rite; but even now it is extraneous to the liturgical synaxis."<sup>3</sup>

On that day, the Pope was wont to betake himself to Santa Sabina on the Aventine, where he presided at the ceremony, received the ashes and addressed the people.

The direction of the penitents was entrusted to a priest chosen for the purpose, and thence called the

the people shall be invited to confess and to receive the penance proportioned to their faults, according to the appointment of the Penitential. See the *Month* (as above), p. 571.

<sup>1</sup> From the Anglo-Saxon *Scrifan*, to accuse or confess.

<sup>2</sup> Gelasian Sacramentary, under the heading "Ordo agentibus publicam poenitentiam." Cf. Canciani, O.S.M., *Leges, etc.*, t. i, p. 220.

<sup>3</sup> Franc. Magani, *L'Antica Liturgia Romana*, t. iii, p. 203.



“penitentiary.” His office consisted in regulating their penitential practices. Afterwards, as canonical penance gradually fell into disuse, the office of penitentiary came to be that of the priest whom the bishop charged with absolving from reserved cases.

The ceremony of the imposition of penance was, in the main, identical with that found in the Roman Pontifical under the rubric, *De expulsiōe publice pœnitentium ab Ecclesia in feria quarta cinerum*; and the “Commination service” in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer is only a poor imitation of this ceremony, for which it professes to be a substitute.

9. From what has been said on the subject of public penance, it is not to be inferred that no private penance existed in the early ages of the Church. According to authors of note, the secret *exomologesis*,<sup>1</sup> spoken of by the Fathers, was no other than private confession; and as the public *exomologesis* entailed the performance of equally public penance, so the private one demanded the doing of a private penance, *pœnitentiam absconsam*.<sup>2</sup>

The great doctor of Alexandria, Origen, speaks thus of confession: “Consider what Scripture says of it, namely, that one ought not to keep one’s own iniquity secret, not to hide it within one’s own breast. And as those who are made weak and heavy by undigested food or too great a quantity of bile are relieved by rejecting these injurious elements, so those who have sinned, and who hide and keep within their hearts the sins that they have committed, are inwardly oppressed and so to speak stifled by the bad elements of sin. But if they become their own accusers, not

<sup>1</sup> This word is taken from the Greek of Matthew iii 6, and that of Mark i 5.

<sup>2</sup> Du Cange, *Glossar.*, under the word “Pœnitentia.” Cf. P. Galtier, S.J., *Dict. Apol.*, “Pénitence,” col. 1801; A. D’Alès, *De Sac. Pœnitentiae*, 1926, pp. 84 and 125.

only do they throw off their sins, but they destroy the whole cause of sickness within themselves.”<sup>1</sup>

In his life of St Ambrose the deacon Paulinus tells us how, when sinners came to confess their faults to him that they might be pardoned, the holy bishop was pierced to the very soul with deep compassion. He wept over the sins that he had heard, and brought the offenders themselves to such a state of repentance as to make it manifest by tears. Now these confessions must necessarily have been secret; for Paulinus adds that not for the world would St Ambrose have spoken about the sins heard by him in confession, unless it were to God, with whom he would intercede for the penitent sinner, a beautiful example which he left to his successors in the priesthood, in order that they should be intercessors with God rather than accusers before man.<sup>2</sup>

Tertullian has a testimony which completes that of Origen on private penance. “Certain people,” he says, “shun the practices of penance or put off begging for admittance to them, because they look upon them as defamatory. Such persons care more for their honour than for their salvation, and are like those who have some secret disease which they will not discover to the physicians through false shame, but would rather run the risk of dying.”<sup>3</sup>

Secret penance, then, existed as well as secret confession; and just as there was solemn public absolution, so there was also private absolution.

Indeed, the solemn absolution, which was given at the end of the penitential period, had for its object the remission of public sins as regards the guilt contracted before the Church only, and not as regards the guilt

<sup>1</sup> Homil. ii. on Ps. xxxvii, n. 6, P.G. IX, col. 1142.

<sup>2</sup> See Baron., *Ann.*, t. iv, A.D. 375, n. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *De Poenit.*, c. viii.

contracted before God. For we must remember that this absolution was nothing more than a reinstatement in face of the Church. But besides these exterior sins there were others, even as there are now, of quite a private character, which therefore were not judicially punished by the Church,<sup>1</sup> although they were opposed to divine grace no less than public sins. Now as all the faithful, not classed among the penitents, were admitted to Communion at least yearly, *i.e.*, at Easter, unless we suppose they received the Eucharist unabsolved, a supposition incompatible with the teaching of St Paul and the practice of the Church,<sup>2</sup> it must be admitted that a private absolution was given them before they were authorised to communicate.

Nevertheless, it would be a great error to imagine that the sacrament of Penance was administered in the early Church with the same frequency and in the same manner that is customary nowadays. To begin with, the number of bishops and of priests delegated by them for such administration was relatively small; then, in those ages of fervour, the life of Christians, taken as a whole, was purer than that of the faithful in later times; and, above all, we must recollect that, if Christ himself established all the sacraments as to their essential elements,<sup>3</sup> he left to his Church—she being empowered to continue his mission and to interpret his teaching—the office of deciding upon the mode and condition of their administration.

Later on we shall see this same Church establishing an obligation for the sinner of receiving the sacrament

<sup>1</sup> "Non habent latentia peccata vindictam." Innocent I to Exuper. of Tolosa, c. iv.

<sup>2</sup> The holy Council of Trent (Sess. XIII, c. 7) declares it to have been the custom of the Church to interpret the probation ordered by St Paul before receiving the Eucharist (1 Cor. xi 28) in the sense of sacramental confession, and not of contrition only, in him who is conscious of a mortal sin.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Conc. Trid., Sess. VII, can. 1.

of Penance at least once a year,<sup>1</sup> and enforcing the prohibition for any one, conscious of having committed a mortal sin, to receive holy Communion without first being reconciled to God by the Sacrament of Penance.<sup>2</sup> In the same way she was free, at the epoch of which we are speaking, whilst fully recognising for her children the obligation of submitting their sins to the power of the keys, not to insist very strongly, as she does now, on confession at stated times. Moreover, God willed that his Church, like all earthly institutions, should be subject to the law of progress and development. Now this law is fulfilled not only in her administrative organisation and the unfolding of her dogmas, but also in her liturgical and disciplinary system.

This, however, is not the place for studying either the doctrine or the history of sacramental confession.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Can. *Omnis utriusque sexus* of the Lateran Council of A.D. 1215; tit. *De Poenit. et Remiss.* Cod. Jur., 906.

<sup>2</sup> Conc. Trid., Sess. XIII, cap. vii and can. xi.

<sup>3</sup> See Conc. Trid., Sess. XIV, cap. v. Mr. Lea's large work, *History of Auricular Confession*, has revived discussion on this grave subject, and has brought to light a certain number of interesting studies. We may cite in particular: Boudinhon, "On the History of Penance," in the *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature religieuses*, fascicule 4 and 5, 1897; Vacandard, "L'Eglise et le Pouvoir des Clefs," in the *Revue du Clergé Français*; Guido Mattiuzzi, S.J., in the *Scuola Cattolica di Milano*, May and June 1901, etc. The declaration and definition of the Council of Trent (Sess. VI, cap. xiv, and can. xxix) may be opposed to the unwarrantable opinion, defended of old by Erasmus (in his notes on the letter of St Jerome to Oceanus, which is the 70th, [al. 30th]) and revived of late by some writers of note, that the Sacrament of Penance, at least in desire, has not *always* been necessary for the remission of *all* mortal sins committed after baptism. The lack of documents as to what was the practice in the early ages need not cause much wonder, as nowhere are ordinary occurrences wont to be registered. The best proof of continuity in the Catholic Church in this respect is precisely the silence as to the introduction of the present custom. The words of St Augustine carry great weight: "Illa consuetudo quam etiam tunc homines sursum versus respicientes non videbant a posterioribus institutam, recte ab Apostolis tradita cre-

10. It must be further remarked that public penance—besides being imposed for public faults only, *i.e.*, when the culprit had been judicially convicted, as is clear from various passages of St Augustine<sup>1</sup>—was, moreover, not always inflicted in the same manner. The Church, in her wisdom, deemed it better that the duty of applying the canons, in view of the divers circumstances of time, place and persons, should be left to the judgement of the bishops.

Some classes of persons, too, were dispensed from becoming public penitents, children, for instance, and generally all such persons as could not endure the severe discipline by reason of their age, health or state of life.<sup>2</sup> Again, married people whose faults might have become known by this means to each other were exempt.<sup>3</sup> Any clerics, whose ministry would have been dishonoured by the performance of public penance, were also dispensed from it.<sup>4</sup> All these persons, however, were not exempted from practising a series of private penitential exercises, as their condition allowed.

11. There is yet an important observation to be

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ditur" (de Bapt. contra Donatist., lib. iv, n. 9). St Thomas fixes clearly the limits within which the discussion should range, when he writes (Suppl. q. vi, art. 6): "Sicut papa non potest dispensare ut aliquis sine baptismo salvetur, ita nec quod salvetur sine confessione, secundum quod obligat ex ipsa vi sacramenti; sed potest dispensare in confessione, secundum quod obligat ex praecepto Ecclesiae, ut possit aliquis diutius confessionem differre quam ab Ecclesia institutum sit."

<sup>1</sup> See especially Sermon cccli, c. iv, n. 10. Cf. Burchard *Decret.*, l. ix, c. 36; Yves de Chartres, *Pannorm.*, p. xv, c. 153.

<sup>2</sup> "Nemo det poenitentiam, nisi quadraginta annorum, penitenti" (II Syn. Rom. under Sylvester I, c. xii). However, the Council of Ancyra (can. xvi) and several penitential codes fix definite penalties for persons under twenty-five years of age.

<sup>3</sup> "Poenitentiam conjugatis nonnisi ex consensu dandam," Conc. Arelat., ii, c. xxii.

<sup>4</sup> "Sicut poenitentiam agere cuiquam non conceditur clericorum," etc., Siricius, *Epist.*, i, n. 14.



made on this subject regarding voluntary penitents. In those ages of vivid faith and religious fervour many of the faithful of their own accord condemned themselves to those painful practices, not because they were stained by any grave sins, but from a pure spirit of humility and of love of God. They thus united themselves with the real penitents, with whom they followed the regular series of penitential observances.

Thus, even though public penance might, in some cases, have been imposed for private sins, yet it could never turn out to be a revelation of secret sins, seeing that it was impossible to distinguish, among the penitents, those who were guilty from those who were innocent; unless, of course, the former had publicly acknowledged their secret offences.

In support of the practice of voluntary penance, Martigny<sup>1</sup> quotes from M. de Boissieu the following inscription, dated in the year 520 and found at Lyons in 1857; its grammatical mistakes show the decay of Latin at the time it was written:

IN · HOC · TVMVLO · REQUIISCET · BO  
 NAE · MEMORIA · CARVSA · RELIGIO  
 SA · QVI · EGIT · PENETENTIAM  
 ANNVS VIGENTI ET DVOS ET VIXE  
 IN · PACE · ANNVS · SEXAGENTA · QVI  
 NQVE OBIET DIAE XIII KALEND OC  
 TVBRIS RVSTIANO ET VITALIANO V CL

“In this tomb rests Carusa of good memory, a religious woman, who did penance for twenty-two years. She lived in peace for sixty-five years. She died on the thirteenth day before the Kalends of

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionn. des Antiq. chrét.*, under the heading “Pénitence Canonique.”

October, under the consulate of Rustianus and Vitalianus.”

12. In the West Maundy Thursday, in the East Good Friday or Holy Saturday, were the appointed days for the reconciliation of penitents to the Church. Those days had been chosen in order that the penitents might be able to receive the holy Eucharist at the Paschal feast.<sup>1</sup> “For,” says St Ambrose, “each time our sins are remitted, we receive the sacrament of the Body of our Lord, to show that it is by virtue of his Blood that pardon is granted to us.”<sup>2</sup>

The reconciling of penitents to the Church was looked upon as a second “initiation”—a second Baptism. We have one proof of this, amongst others, in the performance of the two ceremonies at the most solemn feast of the whole Christian year—the one consecrated to our Saviour’s resurrection.

By right the office of solemn reconciliation belonged to the bishop; but, in danger of death, the Council of

<sup>1</sup> It is a mistake to say with Bl. Bellarmine (*de Poenit.* lib. i, c. xxii, p. 1520, Ingolstadii, 1688) that *all* the penitents were reconciled and communicated yearly on Maundy Thursday. There was, indeed, reconciliation every year, but only for those among the penitents who had achieved their penance. The authority of Innocent I, of the Council of Agde and of St Jerome alleged by the learned Cardinal is not to the purpose.

<sup>2</sup> *De Poenit.* lib. ii, c. 8. The remission of sins here referred to by St Ambrose is not only the sacramental remission of the guilt in the secret tribunal, but also the judicial remission of the penalty in the public tribunal. This is noted by Amort (*de Origine . . . Indulg.*, Part I, p. 28): “Antiquitus sacramentaliter jam absoluti nihilominus aliquandiu, usquedum finiebatur tempus poenitentiae, excludebantur a perceptione Eucharistiae, et aliquali communione fidelium.” In opposition to this Mr. Lea (*op. cit.* p. 8) maintains that Communion could not be refused to an absolved penitent. As a matter of fact, the ancient practice of the Church did not differ much from the present on this point. Then penitents reconciled with God, might often be kept waiting for months—sometimes even for years—before they were admitted to the synaxis; now, also, confessors may have to impose on their absolved penitents the obligation of abstaining for a time from receiving Communion.

Elvira<sup>1</sup> authorises a priest—or in his absence even a deacon—to perform it.

The penitent received from the hands of the bishop a “diploma of penance,”<sup>2</sup> a sort of certificate testifying that he had regularly accomplished the course of penitential exercises, and had been absolved from excommunication.<sup>3</sup> If the penitent died before reconciliation, the holy Sacrifice might none the less be offered for him, because he was supposed to have performed his penance.<sup>4</sup>

The ceremony of reconciliation, still preserved as to its essential parts in the Roman Pontifical,<sup>5</sup> breathes from beginning to end a spirit of the purest charity. It is a pouring forth of the joy and happiness that invade the soul of a father on the return of a longed-for prodigal child. It is a conviction that this child is now in the right state of mind for receiving back his former garments, for taking part in the banquet for which the fatted calf has been killed, for causing universal rejoicing by his presence. For, after the example of God himself, the Church “wills not the death of the sinner, but only that he should be converted and live.”<sup>6</sup>

“Be silent, listen attentively,” the archdeacon would say to the penitents barefooted and prostrate

<sup>1</sup> Conc. Eliberit., c. xxxii. This Council, held in 305, is the most ancient among the Councils which have handed down to us penitential canons. It contains eighty-one disciplinary canons, almost exclusively penitential.

<sup>2</sup> In Greek, *λίβελλον μετανοίας*.

<sup>3</sup> Anastasius Biblioth., quoted by Maigne d'Arnis, *Lexicon Manuale*, etc., at the word “Poenitentia.”

<sup>4</sup> Conc. Carthag., IV, c. lxxix.

<sup>5</sup> It is a remarkable fact that the Book of Common Prayer, while it invented the “Commination Service” as a substitute for the old ceremony, “De Expulsione,” etc., of the Pontificale Romanum, has nothing to replace the touching Ordo “De Reconciliatione,” although it adds that the restoration of public penance is “much to be wished.”

<sup>6</sup> Ezech. xxxiii 11.

at the door of the church. Then, turning to the Pontiff, he went on: "Now, O venerable Pontiff, is the acceptable time; now is the day of divine mercy, and the salvation of humanity; the day on which death is no more, and eternal life has begun. For, although there is no time when the treasures of God's mercy and goodness are not open, yet on these days the remission of sin is more abundant through his indulgence; and it is extended to more souls by the addition of those who are born to the life of grace."

The ancient Gallican liturgy here introduced a touching ceremony. All the faithful present prostrated themselves three times and implored the divine mercy. Then the archdeacon, turning towards the congregation, chanted with it the "prayer of the indulgence," a sort of litany, of which the following is an extract:

Te precamur, Domine, Indulgentia !  
 Procedat ab Altissimo, Indulgentia !  
 Succurrat nobis miseris, Indulgentia !  
 Delicta purget omnibus, Indulgentia !  
 Praestetur poenitentibus, Indulgentia !  
 Patrona sit lugentibus, Indulgentia !  
 Errantes fide corrigit, Indulgentia !  
 Lapsos peccatis erigat, Indulgentia !  
 Te deprecamur, Domine, Indulgentia !

They said this litany three times, reciting special prayers in the intervals.<sup>1</sup>

After this the penitents were brought into the church, which proceeding was called in contemporary liturgical language "bestowing the *postliminium* of the peace of the Church."<sup>2</sup> Then the bishop pronounced the

<sup>1</sup> Duchesne, *Origines*, etc., pp. 427, 428. This beautiful litany, which the Spanish liturgy has preserved for us, does not appear to have formed part of the Maundy Thursday ceremony in Rome.

<sup>2</sup> "Postliminium largiri ecclesiasticae pacis." The expression is Tertullian's, *apud Pamelium*. It is difficult to render this con-

solemn sentence of absolution in these terms: "May Almighty God absolve thee from every bond of thy sins, that thou mayest have eternal life, and live through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." Such was the indulgence then habitually granted to penitents.<sup>1</sup> To it were added other prayers, by which the faithful begged of God to bestow on the sinner the gift of perseverance.

13. From the boon of this solemn reconciliation, as well as from the performance of canonical penance, those were excluded who, after having once been admitted, had fallen back into grave sin and consequently had been cut off afresh from communion with the faithful. For, as we have seen above, public penance and reconciliation were granted but once. Sinners such as these could therefore only be reconciled in private, and sometimes only at the time of death.

A blameworthy zeal, however, at times impelled certain prelates to treat penitents who had fallen back into sin with indiscreet rigour. Some over-

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cise Latin phrase into our modern speech. Among the Romans, the *postliminium* was the right of those who returned to their country to take up again the possessions and privileges that they had left behind at the moment of their departure. "Postliminium est jus amissae rei accipiendae ab extraneo, et in statum pristinum restituendae. . . . Idque naturali aequitate introductum est, ut qui per injuriam ab extraneis detinebatur, is ubi in fines suos rediisset, pristinum jus suum reciperet." Paul., lib. xlix ff., Dig. de Capt. et Postlim.

<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore, inaccurate to say, with the author of the *Trattato storico, dogmatico, critico delle Indulgenze* (Genoa, 1789, p. 98), that, as a principle, absolution from sin was never given except after complete fulfilment of the canonical penance. Amort (I, p. 3, § 2) draws out the opposite thesis at great length. According to him, penitents made their confession at the beginning of Lent, and received absolution from the *guilt*; throughout Lent they had to perform all the penitential practices imposed upon them; and the reconciliation that they received on Maundy Thursday was the indulgence from the *penalty*.



severe enactments went so far as to expressly forbid the granting of pardon and absolution to these sinners even at the point of death, thus depriving them of the help of the sacraments, and abandoning them entirely to the sincerity of their repentance and the mercy of God. These prescriptions were never explicitly approved by the Apostolic See. They were even implicitly disapproved, as is shown by the Decretal of St Innocent I to Exuperius of Tolosa, and by that of St Celestine I to the bishops of the provinces of Vienne and Narbonne.

Exuperius had asked how he should act with regard to a sinner who, having lived since his baptism in disorder and incontinence, was begging on his deathbed for the favour of reconciliation. The Pope, St Innocent I, replies (A.D. 405) that during the persecutions, the custom had been to grant penance, but to refuse Communion, lest the facility of admission to communion should be an incentive to sin. In the future, however, sinners were not to be deprived of penance or communion, in order to avoid imitating the harshness of Novatianus. In his Decretal of A.D. 428 St Celestine severely reproves those who, under pretext of upholding discipline, refused penance even to the dying.

St Leo the Great repeats these wise instructions, and expressly says that if one of the faithful, "finding himself in circumstances of serious danger, should ask for penance and, almost immediately after, for reconciliation, satisfaction should not be forbidden to him, nor should he be refused reconciliation."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Illis qui in tempore necessitatis et in periculi urgentis instantia praesidium poenitentiae et mox reconciliationis implorant nec satisfactio interdicenda est, nec reconciliatio neganda," Leonis I Epist. xci. Cf. Sirmond, *Opp. varia, Venetis*, 1728, t. iii, col. 112; where he quotes the Capitularies of Charles the Bald. See tit. xxviii, a. 859, n. ix, x, *ibid.*

The fact, moreover, of refusing Communion to sinners at the end of life, as is prescribed in several Canons of the Council of Elvira, was never more than local custom. The general practice of the Catholic Church is clearly stated in the thirteenth Canon of the Oecumenical Council of Nicea in these words:

“In what concerns the dying, the ancient canonical law shall be observed. Any one who is on the point of quitting the body should not be deprived of the last and necessary viaticum. But if he should recover, let him be admitted among those who join only in the communion of prayer,”<sup>1</sup> that is amongst the *consistentes*. And again: “In a general way, where the dying are concerned, the Bishop, after examination, shall grant the Eucharist to all who ask for it.”<sup>2</sup> And Pope St Innocent I said in his turn: “If there is peril of death, the penitent should be absolved without waiting for the Paschal feast, in order that he may not die without communion.”<sup>3</sup>

Now, turning for a moment to modern times, all this shows how fully justified was the condemnation passed by Pius VI in his constitution “*Auctorem fidei*” of August 28, 1794, against the 38th Proposition of the Pseudo-Synod of Pistoja. This assembly, whose desperate efforts to revive the expiring sparks of Jansenism are well known, declared that “the fear of finding oneself shut out permanently from Communion and from peace, even at the hour of death, acts as a powerful restraint on those who think little of the evil of sin, and who fear it still less.” The declaration of the Pope, therefore, is that this proposition is perverse in its meaning.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mansi, Conc., t. ii, p. 674.

<sup>2</sup> Mansi, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Epist. ad Decentium.

<sup>4</sup> Const. *Auctorem fidei*, prop. 38. Denzinger, 1538. It may prove useful to the reader to consult the *Corpus Juris* (Part I, Dist. I,

14. Such, then, was the practice of the Church with regard to penance, considered as part of that sincere sorrow which is a necessary condition for recovering baptismal grace. If we have insisted upon this point of former discipline at greater length than we first intended, it is not because we overmuch deplore the disuse of these penitential canons. We do not, like the Jansenists of past times, see in their discontinuance a sign of decay in fervour of charity or in purity of faith. "Satisfactory" penance is not necessarily canonical penance. The former has always existed in the Church; the latter was practised only for a time.

From the very beginning of the Church there have been men who, both in public and private, have voluntarily chosen a state of humiliation and suffering; and every subsequent age has furnished heroic examples of the greatest austerity. From St Mary Magdalen, the penitent beloved of our Saviour, down to St Benedict Labre, the marvel of our own age, the Catholic Church can show an uninterrupted series of heroes who have voluntarily embraced a life of austere penance, either to expiate their own sins or to make reparation for the sins of others. And what are the Religious Orders but schools where penance is taught in its deepest and most real form ?<sup>1</sup>

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Colon. Munat., 1717, pp. 158, *seq.*) where a collection of the principal penitential canons issued by Popes or councils is to be found. The perusal of those canons will help to form an idea both of the view entertained about them, and of their application in ages gone by.

<sup>1</sup> The words of St Thomas are worth quoting here (II-II, q. clxxxvi, art. 1 ad 4): "Cum ad poenitentiam pertineat causas peccatorum excidere, ex consequenti status religionis est convenientissimus poenitentiae locus; unde in Dec. 33, q. ii, cap.: *Admonere*, consulitur cuidam qui uxorem occiderat ut potius monasterium ingrediatur, quod dicitur esse melius et levius quam quod poenitentiam publicam agat remanendo in saeculo."

Satisfactory penance, then, is of divine origin,<sup>1</sup> hence it can never cease to exist in the Church. Canonical penance, on the other hand, is a human institution, and is therefore subject to necessary variations caused by time, place and many other circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

To decide at what period, in what countries, and to what extent such penance should be practised is the right and duty of the Church, which is "the house of God, the column and the support of the truth,"<sup>3</sup> and on which the Mantle of Christ has fallen as a heritage, *i.e.*, "His mind and his spirit."<sup>4</sup>

It is not utterly impossible that the Church may revive one or other of her penitential canons. Still, we hold that there is much truth in a shrewd observation made by Perrone. He says:<sup>5</sup> "Those who unduly extol the primitive discipline of the Church and take pleasure in discrediting that of our own day, really wish to rid themselves of both—of the ancient discipline which no longer exists and of the new which they despise."

In the "Commination Service" of the Prayer

<sup>1</sup> This is clear from the teaching of our Lord, Matt. xii 41. "The men of Niniveh shall rise one day in judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they did penance at the preaching of Jonas. And behold a greater than Jonas here." Examples of private and public penance may be found in the *Text-book of Holy Scripture*, by the Rev. K. Vaughan.

<sup>2</sup> As the reconciliation of penitents is often designated, in early writers, by the expression "imposition of hands," some recent exegetes have thought that St Paul spoke of canonical penance when he wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. v 22), "Impose not hands lightly upon any man, neither be partaker of other men's sins." See Magani, vol. iii, p. 351. But we do not think that the context can allow of any other meaning but that hitherto commonly received—*i.e.*, that St Paul spoke, in that passage, of the ordination of clerics. See Card. Lépicier, tr. *de Ordine*, q. ii, a. i, n. 12, p. 222.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iii 15.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. ii 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Tractat. de Poenit.*, c. cxv, in fine.

Book, the Church of England mourns over the loss of the ancient penitential discipline, and at the same time states, in her thirteenth Article, that "works—and consequently works of penance—done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasing to God . . . yea, rather, for that they are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin."<sup>1</sup>

15. In carefully studying the practice of the Church in the early centuries, we find that, from the fourth century downwards, the Bishops had the power of curtailing the duration of penance in the manner they considered best.<sup>2</sup> They could even make the penitents pass straight from the degree of *audientes* to that of *consistentes*, without going through the intermediate rank of *substrati*, or "prostrates." This was a great concession, the time of penance as *substrati* being the longest of all, and sometimes lasting as long as fifteen years.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Edgar C. S. Gibson, in his *Commentary on the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England* (London, 1902, p. 423), says that "The real object of this article is simply to guard against the practical revival of Pelagianism by the scholastic theory of congruous merit," some among the Schoolmen teaching "that man might be entitled to receive initial grace as the reward of actions done in his own strength without the aid of God's Holy Spirit," thus meriting it "of congruity" (p. 410). It may be that some among the Schoolmen have not always been quite exact in their expressions, but the teaching of the Catholic Church is that no exercise of the natural faculties and no good use of them is the medium of grace. St Thomas puts it very clearly: "*Homo non potest se praeprare ad lumen gratiae suscipiendum, nisi per auxilium gratuitum Dei interius moventis*," I-II, q. cix, art. 6. (Cf. Conc. Trid., Sess. VI, can. iii.) In the meantime the Catholic Church teaches that the good works done before justification, although in no way deserving grace, are no sin in themselves (Conc. Trid., *loc. cit.*, can. vii).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Dict. Theol.* VII, col. 1600.

<sup>3</sup> See in Eusebius, H.E., Lib. V., c. xxxii., an example of the complete remission of a canonical penance which ought otherwise to have been fully accomplished before absolution.



This power of the Bishops is mentioned, for instance, in the tenth and twelfth canons of the Council of Nicea, A.D. 325. It is there declared that, in proportion to the fervour which a penitent shall have shown in the accomplishment of his penance, it is in the Bishop's power to condone it and to dispense him from performing the whole of it.<sup>1</sup>

This had been previously decreed by the Council of Ancyra, about A.D. 314. "We decree," says the fifth canon, "that the Bishops, taking into account the penitents' conduct, have power either to show mercy, or to prolong the duration of the penance. Let them, above all, examine their previous and subsequent life, and according to this they may use gentleness in their regard."<sup>2</sup>

Later, the Council of Lerida, A.D. 524, formulated for Bishops the same rule for which St Basil, in his canonical letter to Amphilochius, had previously given the following reason: "He who has the power to bind and to loose, may shorten the time of penance for those who truly repent."

Now this power was, at that period, not a new thing in the Church. It had already existed for a long time and the texts of the Councils given above point to a previous exercise of it.<sup>3</sup> Further, as we can find no trace of a first introduction of this discipline and as, on the other hand, we do not meet with any protest against it, we may without rashness refer its institution to apostolic times.

This practice shows that the Church not only dispensed sinners from submitting to penance of an ecclesiastical character, but that, in the fullness of her power, she shortened, and sometimes even

<sup>1</sup> Can. xii; Mansi, Conc., t. ii, p. 673.

<sup>2</sup> Conc. Ancyr., can. v; cf. can. ii; Mansi, *l.c.*, pp. 514 and 515.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Dict. Apol.* II, 726.

entirely remitted the penalty, with regard to God as well as to man, on account of the superabundant satisfactions of Christ and the saints. This is quite plain from the writings of the Fathers, and particularly from those of St Cyprian. Besides, had it been otherwise, *i.e.*, had the Church not believed that her dispensation was valid also before God, this mode of procedure would have been utterly misleading.

16. In the following centuries, we see the Bishops continuing to make use, with apostolic liberty, of this power of curtailing penances and of reconciling sinners to the Church before the time assigned by the sacred canons was over.

When St Ambrose took possession of the see of Milan, his church was so largely infested with the Arian heresy that there were hardly any of his flock left whose faith had not become tainted, and who openly acknowledged Jesus Christ as consubstantial Son of the Father. Hence, when the Arians returned to the true faith, about A.D. 375, the holy Bishop judged it expedient to shorten the usual time of penance in their case. He even went so far as to open the doors of the Church to them at once, since otherwise his flock would have consisted solely of penitents. He was reproached for this condescension by certain zealots who accused him of being over-prodigoal in granting ecclesiastical indulgence. The same thing happened to St Gregory Nazianzen, Patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>1</sup>

The Church of Africa, to give another instance, had been devastated by the Donatist schism. As soon as things became fairly quiet again, the Bishops, anxious to bring about unity, assembled in national council at Carthage (A.D. 401) and drew up letters to Pope Anastasius and the Italian episcopate asking what

<sup>1</sup> St Ambrose, *De Poenit.*, Book II, cc. vii, viii. See Baronius, t. iv, at the year 375, n. 25.

indulgence should be granted to those heretics who wished to return to the Church. The letter said that, if these Bishops judged well, the African episcopate proposed to reinstate the Donatists in an informal way, as their number was too great to allow the application of the penitential discipline in their case. They also proposed that the clergy should be authorised to exercise the orders which they already possessed. St Augustine<sup>1</sup> informs us that these proposals were accepted and carried out.

The truth is that the very act of returning to the Church, the humiliation inseparable from acknowledging the error that is being renounced, the joy of saints on earth and of angels in heaven were sufficient motives in the Bishops' eyes for omitting, in the case of these heretics, the usual long period of penitential exercises. They knew that the latter were amply fulfilled by the inexhaustible merits of our Lord and his saints.

The approach of a persecution was another reason for granting remission to public penitents, as it was most desirable that they should then be in communion with the Church so as to be fortified by the prayers of the faithful. For at such a time, says St Cyprian, it is "not the sick or dying that need peace and reconciliation, but rather the living. For we must not leave those without arms whom we exhort to fight, but on the contrary we must strengthen them with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The holy Eucharist being intended to fortify those who receive it, we must not deny it to those whom we wish to protect from the enemy."<sup>2</sup>

When, however, as we have seen above, a penitent

<sup>1</sup> *Contra Cresconium*, Book II, cc. xi and xiii. See Baronius, t. v, at the year 401, n. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. lvii.

was in danger of death, he was absolved and usually received Communion, but only on the understanding that he should return to his state of penance if he afterwards recovered. This is prescribed, for instance, by the fourth Council of Carthage.<sup>1</sup>

17. It has been necessary to insist at length, here, on the ancient discipline of canonical penance, because it is to this that we must turn if we would gain an accurate notion of the nature and extent of an indulgence: of its nature, because an indulgence is neither more nor less than the substitution of certain works for canonical penance, in the eyes both of God and of the Church; of its extent, because when we speak

<sup>1</sup> Can. lxxvi, Mansi, t. iii, p. 957. On the nature and effects of public penance the reader may also consult St Thomas, Suppl. q. xxviii, where the Angelic Doctor (art. 3) distinguishes public from solemn penance, the latter being that which is practised in the form used in the Pontificale Romanum. Of the many contributions of recent writers on the penitential discipline, F. X. v. Funk's article on the "Bussdisciplin," in the *Kirchenlexicon* of Wetzer and Welte (2 Auflage, pp. 1561-1590), may assist the student who wishes to know more on this intricate subject. Besides other writers of note, several of whom we have already quoted in the course of the present chapter, we may particularly mention Schmitz, *Die Bussbücher und das Kanonische Bussverfahren*, 2 Bd., Düsseldorf, 1898; E. Vacandard, *La Pénitence publique dans l'Église primitive*, Paris; Batiffol, *Les Origines de la Pénitence*; H. Koch, "Die Büsserentlassung in der alten abendländischen Kirche," in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1900, heft. iv, pp. 481, seq.; Boudinhon, in *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature religieuse*, 1902, t. vii; F. Pignataro, S.J., *De disciplina Poenitentiali priorum Ecclesiae saeculorum*, Rome, 1904; P. Galtier, S.J., *De Poenitentia*, Paris, 1923; *Dict. Apol.* III, col. 1764; D'Alès, *De Sac. Poenit.*, Paris, 1926; E. Magnin, *Dict. Theol.* VII, col. 1594; Card. Lépicier, *de Poenitentia*, q. iii, append., pp. 134, seq. We must warn the reader, however, that the subject has not yet been exhaustively studied, and historic researches have yet to say the last word on the precise bearing of public penances in the first ages. But whatever light we may expect from these researches, they must fail to give us exact information as to the practice of the Primitive Church, unless they are based upon those dogmatic principles which theology teaches us flowing from divine revelation. To overlook these principles would be to expose oneself to error.

of an indulgence of "forty days," or of "seven, ten, or twenty years," it is with reference to the ancient penances lasting for such a period.

An indulgence of a year is not, therefore, as might be supposed, the remittance of a year of purgatory, but it is the substitution of some satisfaction, drawn out of the treasury of the Church, equivalent to a year of the ancient canonical penances; and as the latter took the place of a corresponding penalty due to God, either in this world or in the next, an indulgence of a year exonerates the Christian who gains it from a proportionate amount of punishment which God might inflict on him in this world or in the next.

But God alone knows what this punishment would be, because he alone can gauge the depth of malice attached to the sin, and fix the debt corresponding to the offence. Nobody, therefore, can know precisely to how much diminution of his temporal penalty an indulgence that he has gained corresponds. Our calculations on this point can never be more than approximate; they will never attain to certainty. No doubt, if an indulgence of a hundred days can remit a certain portion of our debt, one of two hundred days will remit double that amount; but how much the portion effaced actually is, God alone, who sees all things, can know.

18. Before closing this chapter it may be of use to give some account of one or two illustrious personages who eagerly submitted to public penance, that they might be restored to favour with God and the Church.

The first case shall be that of St Fabiola. She belonged to the distinguished Fabian house, and whilst quite young had married a man of bad morals. Being unable to live with him she left him; and, taking advantage of the liberty allowed her by the civil law, contracted a second marriage. Having become a



widow, she saw what she had done, and was so horrified at her fault that, by the grace of God, she submitted to a severe penance.

St Jerome recounts, in eloquent terms, the voluntary sufferings that this noble-souled patrician imposed on herself.<sup>1</sup> "She put on a hair-shirt that she might publicly confess her error and, on the Paschal vigil, in presence of the whole town of Rome, in the palace (now a sacred temple) of that Lateranus who perished by Caesar's sword, she took her place among the penitents; her face worn and pale, her head humbly bowed, while the Bishop, the priests and the people wept over her. . . ."

"Happy penance!" exclaims St Jerome again, "which, by a humble confession of faults, disarms the anger of God and appeases his indignation! . . . Fabiola denied not her Lord on earth, and the Lord will not deny her in heaven. . . . She entered not into the church of the Lord, but like Mary, sister of Moses, remained outside the holy house until the priest, who had driven her away, invited her to return. She stepped down from her throne, took a mill-stone and ground meal; barefooted she passed over the rivers.<sup>2</sup> . . . She chastised that countenance whereby she had sought to please her second husband. She cast aside jewels, and refused all soft clothing and ornaments."

St Jerome speaks later on of her wonderful charity for the poor and of her frequent pilgrimages. "Had I a hundred tongues and a hundred mouths and a voice of iron,<sup>3</sup> I could never tell of all the bodily ills that Fabiola tended and relieved, so that many who were well envied the lot of the sick. She was equally generous to clerics, monks and consecrated virgins. Is there a monastery that she has not helped by her

<sup>1</sup> Ep. lxxvii, ad Oceanum, alias xxx.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xlvii, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 625.

bounty ? an unfortunate and destitute man whom she has not clothed and cared for ? a misery of any kind for which she has not in her goodness found prompt relief ? Rome was too narrow for her loving compassion. . . .

“ Suddenly, without telling any one, she sailed for Jerusalem, where she received the most affectionate welcome from all. There she made use for some time of our hospitality. When I recollect her stay there, I seem to behold over again all that I then witnessed. O my God, how fervently, how eagerly she studied the sacred books ! Like a famished person who cannot be satisfied she searched the prophets, the Gospels and the psalms ; bringing to me her difficulties, and keeping their solution carefully treasured in her heart.

“ Later, she went back to her country, that she might live poorly where she had previously dwelt in opulence. She who had formerly given hospitality to numbers now lived in a hired abode, that she might be able to give away to the poor, in the sight of all Rome, the fruit of what she had sold before all.”

The great Doctor then tells of how Fabiola died and of her funeral :

“ In the death of this admirable woman, the words of Scripture were verified to the letter . . . ‘ To them that love God, all things work together unto good.’<sup>1</sup> Moved by a presentiment of what was coming, she wrote to a certain number of monks to come and relieve her of the burden that oppressed her, so that she might make to herself, of the ‘ mammon of iniquity,’ friends that would receive her into everlasting dwellings.

“ They came, and she made friends of them. When she fell into her last sleep, she was what she had wished to be, nothing but a poor woman, and, throwing off her burden, she flew to heaven. The admiration

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii 28.

that Rome had had for Fabiola living, burst forth with double strength at her death. Even before she had actually given up her soul to her Lord, 'prompt renown, swift herald of so great a grief'<sup>1</sup> had assembled all the people of the city for her obsequies. The chant of psalms and the echoes of joyful Alleluias made the gilded ceilings of the temples shake. 'Here a choir of youths, there a throng of old men, elsewhere groups of women, sang in verse of her great deeds and exalted them to the sky.'<sup>2</sup>

"The triumphs of Furius over the Gauls, of Papirius over the Samnites, of Scipio over Numantia or of Pompey over Brutus's faction were less grand. Those conquerors had subdued their enemies' bodies; Fabiola had overcome spiritual foes. I hear the crowd that goes before her coffin and the multitude that flocks from all parts to follow it. Streets, balconies and roofs were barely enough to hold the spectators. Rome that day saw all her inhabitants rejoicing in the glory of the illustrious penitent. And had not men good cause to rejoice over the salvation of one whose conversion had been a festival for the angels?"

Here then is a striking example of the spiritual blessing that the penitential discipline was able to work in the soul. Such fruits as these are the best apology for the institution itself. But we must speak here of another case of public penance furnished us in the person of the Emperor Theodosius the Great, about A.D. 370. This case will, as we hope, throw a new light on the subject with which we are dealing.

19. We read how at that time the people of Thessalonica, in a riot, had put several of the emperor's officers to death. Theodosius heard of this when he was at Milan, and gave way to violent anger. St Ambrose, however, succeeded in appeasing him, and

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, XI, 139.

<sup>2</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, VIII, 287.

made him promise to forgive the people. Nevertheless, upon the representation of some officials to the effect that such excesses should on no account be left unpunished, the emperor signed an edict for the death of the offenders which was carried out with great cruelty. The people, whilst assembled in the circus, were suddenly surrounded by soldiers, and an appointed number of them were put to death, amidst scenes of terrible brutality.

When the sad news of this massacre reached Milan, St Ambrose was deeply grieved. He wrote to the emperor setting forth the atrocity of the massacre at Thessalonica. "Sin," said the Bishop, "is effaced only by tears; no angel, no archangel can remit it on any other condition. The Lord himself forgives only those who do penance. I advise, entreat, warn thee to submit to it." The emperor replied by alleging the example of David's adultery and homicide. "Since thou hast imitated his faults," replied St Ambrose, "imitate him also in his penance." Theodosius submitted, and for eight months refrained from entering the church.

On Christmas day he was in his palace, shedding many tears, when Rufinus, his most intimate adviser, asked him the reason of his grief. "I am weeping," said the emperor, "at the thought that God's house is open to slaves and beggars, but remains shut to me; and that, therefore, heaven too is shut." "I will go," said Rufinus, "and entreat the Bishop to absolve thee." "No," answered the emperor, "I acknowledge the justice of his censures. I know that his respect for the imperial dignity will never make him do anything whatsoever against the law of God."

However, Rufinus set off for the church; and Theodosius, with some hope of pardon, followed him at some little distance. Rufinus made his request;

but Ambrose declared that he would rather let himself be slain than admit the emperor to the church.

Shortly after Theodosius arrived; and, although Rufinus gave him the Bishop's answer, he went straight to St Ambrose, who was then sitting in the atrium of the basilica, and begged that he would be pleased to grant him absolution. The prelate represented to him that his request was opposed to the laws of God. "I revere them," said the emperor, "and have no thought of entering the holy place in defiance of canonical interdiction, but I entreat thee to deliver me from these bonds and not to close against me the doors that the Lord has opened to those who do penance." "And what penance," asked the saint, "hast thou done for so grave an offence?" "It is for thee," replied the emperor, "to appoint what I am to do." Then St Ambrose ordered him to submit to the ordinary course of public penance; and, the emperor consenting, the excommunication was removed and he was admitted to the Church.

Here, therefore, was a kind of indulgence; for this remission was granted to Theodosius before he had accomplished any part of the canonical penance. Still, he would not pray standing, or even on his knees; but having laid aside his imperial insignia, he prostrated himself on the ground, uttering David's words, "My soul hath cleaved to the pavement; quicken thou me according to thy word."<sup>1</sup>

In his work *The City of God* St Augustine has handed down to posterity a panegyric, eloquent in its brevity, of the penance done by Theodosius. "Has anything been seen more admirable than the religious humility of that prince? The intrigues of some of his favourites had induced him to punish the rebellion of the Thessalonians after he had promised, at the

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxviii, 25.



Bishop's request, to forgive them. He was punished according to the discipline of the Church, and did such penance that the dread of rousing the imperial anger, formerly felt by his subjects, gave way to prayers and tears at the sight of such humility."<sup>1</sup>

Theodosius always cherished a grateful remembrance of the indulgence that he then received from the Church. For, as St Augustine testifies,<sup>2</sup> when his enemies' sons, being yet pagans, took refuge in the churches as in places of safety, he persuaded them to become Christians, showed them true charity, and, instead of confiscating their property, loaded them with honours.

These examples are a clear proof of the severity with which the Church judges sin, and of how she interprets the divine precept of penance as the means of recovering God's friendship.

20. In conclusion, a few words must be said about the priest named the "Penitentiary," mentioned above.

This office is perpetuated at Rome, in the person of the "Cardinal Grand Penitentiary," and of the "Priests Penitentiary" who are under him. The holy Council of Trent prescribed the institution, in all cathedrals, of a Canon Penitentiary definitely charged with the administration of the sacrament of Penance.<sup>3</sup>

In Rome the Penitentiaries hold, in sign of office, a long wand or *ferula*, with which they touch the penitent who kneels before them. Benedict XIV granted twenty days' indulgence to the performance of this rite, which may be gained every time by both Penitentiary and penitent.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Civ. Dei*, Book V, c. xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Sess. XXIV, c. viii, De Reform. *Cod. Jur. Can.* 398-401.

<sup>4</sup> Concession of February 6th, 1748. By a decision of September 25, 1769, Clement XIV made this indulgence applicable to the souls in purgatory.

This custom, we are assured,<sup>1</sup> dates from the primitive ages of the Church, and has never been interrupted. There is, moreover, good reason for believing that it is derived, like so many other customs, from a practice of ancient Rome. For one of the legal modes of freeing slaves there consisted in touching their heads with a rod called *vindicta*. The lictor, by order of the *praetor* of the city, placed this rod on the head of the slave to be freed, and thus set him at liberty—*vindicabat in libertatem*; whilst he solemnly pronounced the words, “We declare this man free and a Roman citizen.”<sup>2</sup>

This makes clear the mystical meaning of the *ferula*. It signifies liberation from the slavery of sin, with admission to citizenship of the Church for the penitent; whilst in the Penitentiary it symbolises spiritual power and jurisdiction, as well as the justice that he is called upon to administer. For a rod or sceptre is, in the language of Scripture, a sign of equity and ruling power.<sup>3</sup> The angels are often represented holding rods in their hands; and in the book *De Coelesti Hierarchia*, falsely attributed to St Denis the Areopagite, Pachymeras says that the rod placed in the hands of angels is the symbol of their royal dignity, of their character as rulers and of their office in the carrying out of the divine will.<sup>4</sup>

We may also mention here, in connexion with the Penitentiaries’ wand, the custom common to all Christians in the early ages of holding a staff during the celebration of divine service; and we find Amalarius

<sup>1</sup> *Manuale Facultatum Minorum Poenitentiariorum Apostolicorum*, VII, Romae, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> “Profitemur hunc praesentem hominem esse liberum et civem romanum.” We learn this from Constantine Harmenopoulos, who has also preserved to us the Greek words of the formula.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. i 8.

<sup>4</sup> In *Bibl. Patr.*, t. ii, p. 187, § 5.

impressing upon the faithful that they must put down the staff while the Gospel is read.<sup>1</sup> The Christians had borrowed this custom from the Jews,<sup>2</sup> and they used the staff as a support during the long hours they spent in church, where they almost always prayed standing.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to record that the staff is still used by the Abyssinians while chanting on feast-days the whole Psalter of David to the sound of the tambourine and sistrum. With time a custom grew up of placing a cross at the top of this staff to remind the faithful of the mystery of our redemption.<sup>4</sup>

The staff used in our day by pilgrims from Tyrol to the Eternal City, as well as that carried by the members of some confraternities, is probably a traditional remnant of the ancient universal custom.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, this same staff, having become after many modifications the pastoral staff or episcopal crosier, is now exclusively reserved among the clergy for the chief prelates.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De Off. Eccl.*, Book iii, 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Exod.* xii, 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Can.* xx, *Conc. Nic.*; *Baron.*, an. 58, n. 109; and an. 325, n. 115.

<sup>4</sup> St Augustine, *Serm.* cvii, de Tempore.

<sup>5</sup> See Ciampini, *Vet. Monum.* Part I, c. xv, Romae, 1690.

<sup>6</sup> On the Penitentiaries' staff the reader may also consult F. Andr. Tarani a Spalannis, O.F.M., *Manuale pro Minoribus Poenitentiariis Apostolicis*, Romae, 1906, p. 122. The reader will also find in this book valuable information about the privileges and faculties of minor Penitentiaries of the Roman basilicas.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LAPSED

#### *From the Second to the Fourth Century*

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ.”—*Gal. vi 2.*

Christ and the pagan divinities—Origin of idolatry—Its malice—Its extent in the first ages of the Church—The *Octavius* of Minutius Felix—Idolatry and the times of persecution—Snares laid for Christians—The persecution of Decius—Desertions—Various classes of Lapsed—Conditions of their reinstatement—The *Libellus Martyrum*—It was in all essentials an indulgence—St Cyprian, Novatian and Felicissimus—St Cyprian’s book *De Lapsis*—Pope St Marcellinus and the Lapsed—Popes St Marcellus and St Eusebius—Charity of Christians for the dead.

THE chief object of our divine Saviour’s coming on earth was to restore his eternal Father’s kingdom, which is a monarchy and an absolute one.

In this kingdom the evil one had sown dissension. In place of the one omnipotent Lord he had raised a whole army of wretched petty princes. It was a treacherous and deceitful work, for it is written of the malicious spirit: “He was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth, because the truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father thereof.”<sup>1</sup>

In direct opposition to the devil’s work, Christ Jesus said of himself: “For this was I born, and for

<sup>1</sup> John viii 44

this came I into the world : that I should give testimony of the truth.”<sup>1</sup> The truth is eternal life ; and “ This is eternal life : that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”<sup>2</sup> Hence the Church, founded by Christ to carry on the work that he himself had begun in this world, was given as her mission the task of teaching the existence of the one true God, and of defending this truth against the doctrines of heathen superstition peopling Olympus with innumerable gods and goddesses.

In the fulfilment of this mission the Church did not resort to open strife with her enemies. She rather aimed at quietly instilling her own principles into all that was purest and most rational in human nature, and at thus laying hold by degrees of man’s highest and noblest affections.

For the existence of one supreme God is not, properly speaking, an article of faith ; it is a truth peremptorily proclaimed by reason itself. The heart of man on the other hand was not originally made to be distracted by thousands of different and often unnatural affections, such as was the case with the pagan religion.

Thus the Church, taking for her motto the words of the prophet, “ Return, ye transgressors, to the heart !”<sup>3</sup> taught the pagans that they might live in harmony with the dictates of human nature by acknowledging the one God sovereign master of all things. This was the method St Paul adopted when he instilled the truth of Christianity and the existence of one only God in the members of the court of Areopagus, in which he appealed to the natural feelings of his audience, and took advantage with such great wisdom of their altar erected to the “ unknown God.”<sup>4</sup>

2. Idolatry, however, had taken deep root in the

<sup>1</sup> John xviii 37.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xli 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xvii 3.

<sup>4</sup> Acts xvii 23.



world. It is doubtless true that, for some time after the creation of man, the idea of a single Divinity was kept alive on earth;<sup>1</sup> but whatever view we may entertain as to the length of this time, the origin of idolatry must certainly be assigned to a very remote period. Although different writers on this subject are not agreed as to whether it existed before the deluge, it is certain that after the confusion of tongues and the dispersion of families, men by degrees forgot the teaching of their ancestors, and with few exceptions fell into a state of gross ignorance and barbarism.

Still, idolatry was never universal. "The gentiles," says St Augustine, "never fell away to the false gods so far as to lose their belief in one true God, from whom proceed all things in nature."<sup>2</sup> If it had been otherwise, indeed, how could St Paul have said that men were "inexcusable, because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God"?<sup>3</sup>

The origin of idolatry was ignorance. Men saw life and movement throughout the universe. They beheld the regular succession of day and night, of seasons and years; the germination of every plant at fixed times, the flow of the waters, the motion of the planets. But not knowing the cause of these phenomena, they conceived the world as full of ruling gods and protecting goddesses, either born of the Supreme Being or bound thereto by ties of family or friendship. So it was that they imagined genii charged with governing various portions of the earth—fairies in the forest, naiads in the streams, penates in the houses, and Bacchus, surrounded by satyrs, presiding at festivals, while the vast starry host became personified for them in the forms of numberless divinities, types of vice as well as of virtue, of injustice

<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. xciv, art. 4 ad 2.

<sup>2</sup> *C. Faust. Man. c. xx*, n. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i 20, 21.

as well as of righteousness, of falsehood as well as of truth.

But another reason for idolatry, and possibly the chief one, lay in the worship that came to be paid by men to those friends and relations whom they had lost by death. The process of gradually transforming the image of a beloved and departed one into a divinity is minutely described in the Book of Wisdom, in a passage to which the reader may here be referred.<sup>1</sup>

From the worship of persons who had once lived on earth, it was easy to pass on to purely imaginary gods. A desire to obtain the highest sanction for every instinct or passion, even of the lowest order, caused a multitude of gods and goddesses to be invented as personifications of them. By this means all bad actions came to be justified, and the most abominable deeds went unreprieved. Thus was mythology built up into a regular system, carefully organised and embracing all imaginable needs and interests.

The developments of civilisation, far from hindering mythology, only helped to further its development. For, as time went on, the religious and civil festivals in honour of these false divinities increased in number and splendour. There was no need to impose the observance of such solemnities by any law; their very nature was more than enough to attract the human heart, with all its animal passions. These festivals, moreover, were very unlike the Hebrews' feast days, which were of a chaste and sober nature, and outwardly restrained and austere. Tacitus speaks with proud contempt of the Jewish festivals of his time, because of their joyless character as compared with those of the pagans.<sup>2</sup>

3. Treating of idolatry, St Thomas reviews the

<sup>1</sup> Wisd. xiv 15-20.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. Lib. V., c. v.

various modes in which the heathen paid divine homage to false gods.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes their homage was paid to the material thing itself, to the very idol of wood, stone or of any other substance to which they addressed themselves. In this case they misunderstood the real purpose of an image, which is to represent the person whose likeness it bears and to whom the honour or worship offered should finally be referred.

But oftentimes the pagans really intended to worship the individual represented by the image. This might be a person who had distinguished himself by great civil or military achievements: a Hercules or a Romulus, an Æneas or a Numa Pompilius. These personages being merely creatures, their *cultus* was, properly speaking, real idolatry.

Not unfrequently, also, pagan worship had for its object evil spirits inhabiting statues of which they had taken possession and from which they issued commands or imparted oracular replies to questions put to them. Some indeed of the heathens intended to honour God, but a god of their own invention, a god whom they conceived of as the soul of the world, giving life and movement to all things, and of whom a portion was enclosed in the statue before their eyes.

All these errors had one common source, the levity and vanity of man. "All men are vain," says the Book of Wisdom,<sup>2</sup> "in whom there is not the knowledge of God, and who by these good things that are seen could not understand him that is, neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman. But have imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theol.* II-II, q. xciv, a. 1. Cf. McDonald, "Studies in Idolatry," *Irish Theological Quarterly*, I. p. 464.

<sup>2</sup> *Wisd.* xiii 1-5.

water, or the sun and moon to be the gods that rule the world." Yet a mere glance at the things of the world must lead the mind to reprove idolatry. "For by the greatness of the beauty and of the creature the Creator of them may be seen, so as to be known thereby."

4. At the time when our divine Lord came into the world, and during the three subsequent centuries, civilisation was in its fullest glory, and idolatry with it. The latter had completely saturated the morals and manners of mankind. It was inseparable from civil and military functions; it supported the fine arts; it alone inspired contemporary literature; it formed part of the very language of the people. Men swore by Jupiter and made oath by Bacchus; and these asseverations, which are now but unmeaning formulas, had then a real value, based as they were on a firm belief in the pagan gods.

Tertullian, in his book *De Idolatria*, eloquently sets forth the terrible developments that had resulted, in his day, from this superstitious cult of false divinities.

At the several epochs of persecution this worship of heathen gods was the touchstone that marked out the true believer from his false brethren. But, during the intervals of religious peace allowed by the emperors, it was easy for Christians to abstain from worshipping idols. Their relations with the heathens were friendly; sometimes, indeed, intercourse with them was so familiar that the Fathers of the Church felt obliged to restrict it, lest the faithful should suffer in their faith and in their religious life from too close a contact with paganism. Tertullian in his book *Ad Uxorem*, a true testament addressed by him, whilst yet a Catholic, to his wife, advises her, if he should die first, not to marry again; but, if she wishes to do so, he begs her

not to marry an idolater, lest such a one should become an obstacle to the practice of her religion.

We may here remark, however, that the easy intercourse between Christians and heathens was the means intended and appointed by God for enlightening the gentiles, and for banishing from their minds the odious prejudices disseminated by enemies of the Christian name against the Church of God and her members.

5. Of all the writings that have come down to us from the Fathers of the Church of that period, none perhaps gives so good an account of the relations between Christian and heathen, as well as of the impious pagan practices and the absurd calumnies which were spread abroad against Christianity, as the *Octavius* of Minutius Felix.

Minutius Felix was a celebrated lawyer who had abandoned the worship of idols for the Christian faith. He had two friends, Cæcilius Natalis and Januarius Octavius. Cæcilius lived in Rome in the same house with his friend, but was a heathen; and, though upright of heart, and having a mind open to truth, he yet professed the greatest horror of Christianity and of its practices. Octavius, a fervent Christian, usually lived away from Rome on account of legal work. One year, however, he came to spend his autumn vacation with his friend in the capital; and during this time the three of them betook themselves to Ostia to enjoy the country and the sea-bathing. On their way they came across a statue of Serapis, and Cæcilius gave it a kiss as a sign of homage. Octavius was shocked and, turning to Minutius, reproached him with having a friend who "stumbled over the stones on the road in broad daylight." Stung to the quick by this sarcastic remark, Cæcilius bitterly complained that such words were insulting, and added that he



could defend his own religion much more easily than Octavius could give a reason for his.

This incident, very naturally, brought about a hot discussion between the two friends, and Minutius offered to act as umpire. Cæcilius poured forth all the accusations then common against the Christians—their mysterious signs, their adoration of an ass's head, the murdering and eating of children, besides many other crimes unfit to mention. He declared, moreover, that Christians have no God to whom they can point; that their God has neither temple nor image; that they adore the mere phantom of a deity whom they imagine to know and see all things; and that they give up the present, which is certain, for the delusive hope of imaginary benefits to come, which they expect to obtain from this shadowy God.

These indictments forcibly remind one of the calumnies which, not so very long ago, Protestants were in the habit of uttering against Catholics and their practices.

Octavius had no difficulty in refuting his friend's accusations. In particular he proved to him that, even apart from revelation, the innumerable deities invented by mythology are irreconcilably opposed to the idea of that unity of the Supreme Being, which is absolutely required by science, and, indeed, by the very nature of things. He further made clear to him what the true origin of idolatry was, and showed that the gods of the heathen were in fact evil spirits, who were compelled to obey the voice of a Christian if he should order them to depart in the name of the one true God.

Cæcilius ended by being convinced of the truth through Octavius's arguments, and by embracing the faith. Minutius Felix set down this conversation in writing, and the report of it became his work entitled *Octavius*.

6. Such, then, in times of peace, was the intercourse between the early Christians and their heathen fellows.<sup>1</sup> But, in times of persecution, this friendliness cooled down, if it did not entirely cease. The fact is that it is very difficult to gain an accurate idea of the Christians' attitude towards the pagans and the worship of idols during those troubled periods. All Christ's adherents were then looked upon as forming a vile mob of people without religion or reason, good for naught but to be burnt on the altars of the gods in the place of that incense which they obstinately refused to offer.

The danger in which Christians were of being persecuted depended largely upon the expressions used in the imperial edicts. These edicts lent themselves to many and various interpretations, according as the prefects of provinces were more or less inclined to cruelty as regards the Christians. This accounts for the fact that certain Churches were able to enjoy comparative peace during a spell of persecution, whilst the faithful around them were enduring severe trials or cruel torments. On the other hand, there were some provinces in which the Christians were actually sought out and put to death in times of peace, thanks to the fanaticism of individual prefects.

7. Some of the emperors, more refined in their cruelty than others, sought to torture the consciences of their victims before seeing them faint away on the rack.

Among all the persecutors Julian the Apostate stands out as peculiarly cruel. It was the ancient Roman custom to adore not only the emperors but also their images; and this act of adoration was a purely political sign of honour which had nothing to do with

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Keogh, S.J., "Social Position of Early Christians," *Ecclesiastical Review*, 36, p. 616; 37, p. 43.

religion. The imperial statues were generally decked with trophies, such as representations of prisoners or of other equally indifferent persons or emblems. But Julian caused certain idols to be placed among these harmless images, so that Christians could not offer the ordinary homage to his own statue without committing idolatry. Jupiter might be seen there, coming down from heaven and presenting the crown and imperial robe to the emperor; or Mars and Mercury gazing complacently upon him, as if bearing witness to his military courage and his eloquence.

St Gregory Nazianzen, Theodoret and Sozomen tell us of another stratagem employed by the apostate ruler for detecting Christians and for putting their faith to the test.

Custom required that, under certain circumstances, the emperor should sit upon a raised throne and should thence distribute largess to his troops, giving them gold coins according to each one's rank and desert. To this custom Julian added an extraordinary ceremony. He had an altar placed near him on which were burning coals, and ordered that every soldier should throw incense upon this altar before coming up for the reward due to him. Those who were warned in time managed to escape the snare by feigning sickness; others, impelled by either fear or greed of gold, gave way to the temptation; but the majority of the Christian soldiers never suspected the trap laid for them.

One day when several soldiers were sitting at a meal together, they invoked Christ's name before they drank by raising their eyes to heaven and making the sign of the cross over the cup, according to custom. "What?" called out some one present, "you have denied Jesus Christ, and now you call upon him?" "What do you mean?" the soldiers asked. "Why," replied the other, "you put incense on the altar-

fire." On hearing this the Christian soldiers sobbed and tore their hair, and rushed impetuously from the table straight to the market-place, where they publicly called God to witness that they were Christians, and that they had not betrayed their Master but that the emperor had deceived them. They added that they were ready to wash out their mistake with their blood. From the market-place they ran to the Palace, where they threw the gold that they had received at the emperor's feet, crying out: "It is no gift that thou hast made us: thy money has condemned us to death. Save us! Sacrifice us to Christ! Throw us into the fire; cut off our guilty hands, and give thy accursed gold to someone else!"

The emperor, in a fury, ordered their immediate execution, and they were led outside the town, the people following them full of admiration. As they arrived at the place of martyrdom the eldest of the soldiers begged the executioner to begin with the youngest, lest the sight of his companions' death should shake his courage. This youth, called Romanus, knelt down to receive the death-blow which was about to be dealt, when a messenger arrived from Julian with orders to spare the offenders: he would not let them win the crown of martyrdom. The young soldier, full of grief, exclaimed sadly: "Romanus was not worthy of the name of martyr!" Julian, however, granted the soldiers merely their lives; he banished them to the furthest frontier of the empire, and forbade their dwelling in any town.<sup>1</sup>

We have described the state of paganism in the first ages of the Church at some length, in order to make clear what the condition of the Christians was at that time, the severity of their trials and the

<sup>1</sup> S. Greg. Nazianzen, *Orat.* III; Theodoret, III, c. xvi, xvii; Sozom. Book V, c. xvii.

danger in which they were of failing beneath them. We shall soon see what remedy God provided for those who fell away.

8. But we must mention yet another persecution more violent and cruel than any that had preceded it. This was the persecution of Decius (249-251), which was the occasion for the Church of displaying her maternal condescension and of exercising her power of remitting the temporal punishment due to sin on a greater scale. St Cyprian states that God had revealed this persecution beforehand to a holy person in the Church of Carthage.<sup>1</sup> This person had a vision of a father of a family seated between two youths. The one on his right was resting his head on his hand and appeared profoundly sad; the one on his left held a net, which he made as if to throw over the people surrounding him. A voice was heard announcing that the youth on the right was grieving because his orders were not carried out; whilst the other was rejoicing at being allowed to hurt mankind. This vision, according to St Cyprian, was a sign of the great relaxation that had crept into the Church, and of the approaching storm.

The edict of persecution was peremptory, and it was executed with unheard-of violence. The sole care of magistrates seemed to be to imprison Christians and to put them to death. The threats issued against them were accompanied by the display of instruments of torture of all kinds. There was a display of swords, wild beasts, wheels, gridirons, racks, nails, burning coals, red-hot plates of metal. The victims were not to be quickly put to death; it was the tyrant's intention that their sufferings should be as protracted as possible, and that they should die inch by inch. St Jerome, in his life of St Paul, the first hermit,<sup>2</sup> has handed

<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* xi.

<sup>2</sup> *Sub init. Opp. t. ii, p. 1, Venetiis, 1767.*



down some instances of the savage barbarity used in torturing the Christians. In short, the persecution was so horrible that many people saw in it the fulfilment of that terrible prophecy by which our Lord foretells that even the elect would be deceived if it were possible.<sup>1</sup>

9. It is easier to imagine than to describe the state of anguish and painful excitement into which this persecution threw the Christians, who were by no means prepared to face the storm. They had been enjoying years of peace, and the prolonged rest from trouble had impaired their spiritual vitality. The accumulation of riches, too, had caused a perceptible diminution of fervour. Many had adopted the Christian faith from purely temporal motives—to please a friend, to obtain a post, or from mere love of novelty. The priests themselves had become worldly, and more pains were often taken to provide the churches with precious lamps, silver censers and golden chalices than to ordain worthy ministers of the Gospel.

When the storm burst, many a spiritual structure crumbled, being built on sand. At Alexandria the apostasy was almost universal. Men holding public offices were driven into it by fear of losing their posts. Others, accused by their neighbours, were loaded with chains and dragged to the place of torture; but then their terrified faces and shaking limbs often called forth derisive words from the pagans, who would taunt them with being afraid both of sacrificing to the gods and of dying for their faith. A great many went spontaneously to the altars and denied ever having been Christians. Few were those who suffered imprisonment with constancy, and of these the greater number fell into apostasy afterwards.

At Carthage the defections were still more numerous. The Christians there were in such a hurry to apostatise

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv 24.

that, according to St Cyprian, who was an eyewitness,<sup>1</sup> the magistrates had to prolong their public sittings till night, in order to satisfy all who came to them with their submissions. Those who fell dragged others with them. Many even brought their children in their arms, as though they wished to strip them of the grace of baptism. The rich proved weakest of all through dread of losing their possessions.<sup>2</sup>

10. Now different names were given to the Christians who had abandoned the faith. Those who returned to idolatry of their own accord were called apostates, the others were called *lapsi*, lapsed, *i.e.*, fallen.

There were several classes of lapsed. Some had offered incense to idols and were therefore called *thurificati*; others had stained themselves by eating the flesh of animals sacrificed to the gods, or even by offering such victims themselves; these made the class of *sacrificati*. Others, again, had not gone so far as this, but had had recourse to means of escaping death that were unworthy of a Christian. They had presented to the judges a *libellus*, or certificate, whence their name of *libellatici*. In this they declared that they were not Christians and were ready to offer incense or to eat the flesh of victims, if the magistrates required it.

Yet another class of the lapsed was formed of such as had employed a heathen friend or slave to do in their place the things that hurt their consciences, as though this could have lessened their guilt. Or, in some cases, going yet further, they had given money to the magistrates asking them not to tempt their weak faith, but to give them certificates attesting that they had really obeyed the emperor's orders.

Among the lapsed some had taken a more active

<sup>1</sup> *De Lapsis*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, Book VI, n. 26.

part than others in superstitious worship. They had, for instance, worn the sacrificial crown; or, in the capacity of *flamens*, they had presided over games and spectacles involving objectionable customs in honour of the gods; or they had taken part as actors in theatrical representations, or driven chariots in the circus, or, lastly, had sold victims or incense for sacrifice, or had helped in manufacturing idols or in building altars and temples to the false gods.

We must pity rather than hastily censure the weakness of our forefathers who failed in the saving combat. Martyrdom appears surrounded with a wonderful halo of glory when looked at from a distance, and no doubt it is one of the greatest favours which God has in store for a Christian. But much of this prestige vanishes away in presence of the dread reality—the prison, the rack, the death by slow fire.

There is rashness in wishing for trials such as the martyrs endured, or in trusting in one's future faithfulness under temptation. The prophet Jeremias acknowledged his own weakness when he cried out: "The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed, because his commiserations have not failed."<sup>1</sup> And St Paul repeats after Isaías: "Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been made as Sodom and had been like unto Gomorrha."<sup>2</sup>

Who can tell, besides, the mental anguish, the torment of conscience and the inner struggles of these weak Christians before the threats of their tormentors? And how often were they not seen to rise after a fall, covered with confusion but inspired with fresh ardour! Trusting in divine grace they would courageously come back to face the fury of their tyrants. God, in his goodness, well knows how to turn a fall into a sharp but potent remedy, by which to cure the revolt

<sup>1</sup> Lament. iii 22.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ix 29; Isa. i 9.

of man's senses, the pride of his mind and the weakness of his will.

11. The lapsed were generally held as apostates, and the discipline observed in their regard was particularly severe; the Church rejected them from her communion. In some places they could be admitted to reconciliation and absolution only at the point of death. Ordinarily, however, they might be admitted to perform the penances fixed by the sacred canons, and these penances could be prolonged or shortened by the Bishop accordingly. In the latter case, as we have already seen, a true indulgence was granted.

But, in times of persecution, the Church was much more rigorous in the matter of admitting penitents to reconciliation than in times of peace. For, the trials then being far severer, the temptations to fall were more frequent, and it was feared that pardon too readily granted might cause a relaxation of morals and a weakening of ecclesiastical discipline. However, penitents had one means of smoothing their way of return to the fold. We refer to a custom gradually introduced into Christian communities and sanctioned by the Church—a custom that throws great light upon Catholic teaching respecting the transfer of satisfaction and indulgences generally.

12. No matter how many the defections, there were always in the Church numerous noble souls who stood firm, and who clung to the love of Christ even unto "tribulation, and distress, and famine, and nakedness, and persecution, and the sword."<sup>1</sup> Having confessed their Master before the judge, these valiant Christians still confessed him in prison, whilst preparing for their final confession by death. They, therefore, were souls very dear to our Lord and rich in more merits than were needed for expiating their personal

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii 35.

offences. Might they not, then, intercede for their brethren? Might they not, so to speak, place their own superabundant merits between God and the fallen ones and so win for the latter a more speedy reconciliation with the Church? Charity has ever been ingenious; in this case it worked marvels.

The excommunicated apostates, impelled by remorse of conscience and supported by hope of pardon, sought admittance to the prisons and threw themselves on their knees before the martyrs, entreating these friends of God to grant them a share in the merits they had won and so to help in opening the doors of heaven to them. The martyrs, only too glad to act the part of advocates in behalf of their fallen brethren, gave them a small paper, or ticket, known by the name of *Libellus Martyrum*, which was to be handed to the Bishop. He examined it and, if he judged it expedient, readmitted the penitent sinner to communion with the Church.

Thus, the martyrs became surety for the penitents. They actually offered their own merits in payment for the debt of the lapsed, and the Church consented to accept the substitution out of respect for the noblest and most illustrious portion of her flock. "Filling up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ in the flesh *of her children*, for his body,"<sup>1</sup> which is none other than herself, the Church dispensed the deserters from going through the whole of their penance and received them as prodigal sons back to her arms.

From very early times it had been the custom of sinners to have recourse to the martyrs' intercession for obtaining pardon of their faults; but the practice became much more frequent at the period now under consideration. Tertullian says on this subject: "Some

<sup>1</sup> Col. i 24.



people, being deprived of peace with the Church, seek it from the martyrs shut up in prison. You, therefore, should keep this peace and jealously love and preserve it, so that, when opportunity comes, you may be able to bestow it on others."<sup>1</sup> Tertullian himself rejected this practice on becoming a Montanist; but, in so doing, he only strengthened his own testimony to the truth, which suffices for our present purpose.

It is, no doubt, to this very practice that St Irenæus referred when he wrote: "The holy martyrs were far from showing any sign of ill-will to the apostates. On the contrary, they willingly gave a share of the goods in which they abounded to those who were in need. They showed them hearts full of benevolence and tenderness—truly maternal hearts—and shed many tears over them before God their Father. They begged for eternal life, and God granted it to them; they made their neighbour share in it, and in all things were victorious in the sight of God."<sup>2</sup>

13. This writing or ticket, which the martyr made over to the penitents, was also called his desire—*desiderium*—his bequest, or legacy. It was looked upon as a sort of will and respected as such.<sup>3</sup>

No doubt the Bishop did not always immediately grant what was being asked. He took into account the length of penance yet to be accomplished, as well as the amount already done. Then, all things being duly considered, the martyr's satisfactions were applied to the penitent by virtue of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, and in union with them. The penitent was absolved from his punishment and restored to communion with the Church; in short he was granted a species of indulgence.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ad Martyres*, i.

<sup>2</sup> See Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* Book V, c. ii.

<sup>3</sup> See St Cyprian, *Ep.* xviii.

<sup>4</sup> *Dict. Apol.* II, col. 730.

This grant by the Bishops was valid not only before their own tribunal, the external court, but also before the tribunal of God, the secret court. Thus the remission obtained corresponded actually and efficaciously with the words pronounced. The granting of this concession was called the "giving of peace" to the lapsed: *Pacem dare lapsis*. Indeed, had not the gift of true peace with God followed upon the Bishop's words, the prelates would have come under the divine condemnation, "And they healed the breach of the daughter of my people disgracefully saying: Peace, peace, and there was no peace."<sup>1</sup>

The Fathers of the Church held as certain that the debt due to God was paid for, when the canonical penance itself was remitted. Thus St Cyprian speaking of the lapsed who had come to their last moments without having ended their penance, expresses full confidence that, owing to the martyrs' intercession, "after having received the imposition of hands unto penance, they will go immediately to God in peace." "That peace," he adds, "which the martyrs, by their letters, told us that they desired to have granted to them."<sup>2</sup>

If we now compare this brief description of the "memorials of the martyrs" with what we have said in the first chapters of this work about the true notion of an indulgence, the conclusion is plain that this transfer, approved of by the Bishop, was indeed, at least implicitly, an indulgence.<sup>3</sup> We find in it all the necessary elements. It is the remission of a temporal penalty due to sin; the remission is solemnly and officially recognised by those to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven are entrusted by the Church,

<sup>1</sup> Jer. vi 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. xiii. The imposition of hands unto penance at the hour of death was equivalent to a deathbed absolution.

<sup>3</sup> See *Dict. Theol.* VII, 1595.

and it is granted by the application and in virtue of the superabundant merits of Christ and his saints.

14. The identification of the *libellus martyrum* with the granting of an indulgence is explicitly confirmed by the teaching of the great Bishop of Carthage, St Cyprian.

We have said how numerous the defections were in Carthage. Zealous as he was for the purity and integrity of the faith, St Cyprian had to keep the balance even between laxity and over-severity in readmitting repentant apostates.

The heretic Novatian who, just at that epoch, had been vainly trying to usurp the supreme pontificate in opposition to Pope St Cornelius (A.D. 251), maintained that no lapsed ought ever to be received back into the Church. He gave as a reason for his opinion that there would be no more martyrs if the doors were opened so wide to repentant deserters. St Cyprian discovered and denounced the mischievous character of such a view. "Never believe, my dear brother," he writes, "that the brethren's courage will fail, and that we shall see no more martyrs, because we open a way of repentance to those who have fallen, or offer a hope of peace to the humble penitent. The strength of true believers remains unshaken, and those who love God in the sincerity of their hearts will never fail in sturdiness and valour.

"Although we grant penance and give peace to adulterers at the appointed time, yet virginity has never failed in the Church, nor has the glorious profession of continence been diminished by the sins of others. The Church ever flourishes, adorned as she is by so many virginal crowns. Purity and chastity have not lost their glory; and, though we may grant penance and pardon to adulterers, the vigorous flower of continence is not therefore withered."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Baronius, *Annal. Eccl.* II, a. 254, n. 105.

But St Cyprian met with much stronger opposition from persons who held views wholly contrary to those of Novatian, and who would have liked to see apostates readmitted to the Church without sufficient guarantee of repentance or right dispositions, and even without having fulfilled any portion of their penance. He was therefore compelled to beg the martyrs not to grant the importunate prayers of their clients without extreme prudence.<sup>1</sup>

Certain confessors of the Faith, among whom was a Carthaginian named Lucianus, had the audacity to give, in their own names as well as in those of martyrs from whom they professed to have a commission, letters, or "memorials of peace," conveyed in general terms, and available for one or more persons not named.<sup>2</sup> Others went so far as to traffic with these letters; whilst a few of the inferior clergy assumed the right of reconciling to the Church, without the Bishop's consent, anybody presenting himself armed with such memorials. A man well known for his offences and his revolt against the Church, the heretic Felicissimus, whom Novatian, being as yet only a simple priest, had appointed deacon on his own authority, publicly taught that everybody might be received back into the Church without doing any penance. Here, indeed, was a serious disorder.

A price had been set on St Cyprian's head, and the amphitheatre at Carthage resounded with cries of "Cyprian to the lions!" The holy Bishop, hoping that his absence would calm the sedition, took refuge

<sup>1</sup> "Quoniam audio impudentia vos quorundam premi, oro vos ut petentium desideria caute ponderetis."—Ep. xi *ad Martyres*.

<sup>2</sup> "Lucianus litteras scripsit, martyres universis pacem dedisse, quibus pene omne vinculum fidei et timor Dei et mandatum Domini et Evangelii sanctitas et firmitas solveretur: litteras ad eos feci, ut dominicæ legis et Evangelii ratio teneretur."—St Cyprian, Ep. xxiii *ad Martyres*.

in a secret hiding-place, whence he continued to rule the diocese. From there he also wrote to Rome about the reconciliation of the lapsed. He received from the clergy who were governing the Church of Rome, whilst the Holy See was vacant, an answer which declared in substance that it would not do to weaken the vigour of the Church by granting indulgences indiscriminately, and that they must not loosen the reins of discipline in any way that was derogatory to the honour of the faith. In face of the constantly increasing defections, the letter continued, there was no advantage in granting reconciliation to the fallen, unless the apostates showed signs of true and sincere repentance. Further, the Roman clergy said that they felt Cyprian's firmness to be a consolation to themselves, for they looked upon him as an invincible upholder of primitive discipline.<sup>1</sup>

On receiving this answer, the Bishop wrote from his place of exile several letters to martyrs and confessors, to priests and deacons, and to the laity, setting forth the right discipline of the Church with regard to apostates and their penance and reconciliation. What he insisted upon above all things was the suppression of these blank *libelli* issued by the martyrs, which could be given to anybody. He wrote to the martyrs: "You must be most careful to specify by name the person to whom you wish peace to be granted."<sup>2</sup>

15. The relation an indulgence bears to the absolution granted to the lapsed on the martyr's recommendation appears yet more clearly in St Cyprian's treatise entitled *De Lapsis*, "of the fallen." This book was written in the year 251, as a guide to the Bishops whom

<sup>1</sup> "Moerorem nostrum vigor tuus temperat, dum quorundam improbitatem juste coerces; quos satis mirati sumus ad hoc usque prosilire voluisse, ut pacem sibi non tam peterent quam vindicaret."—Cyprian, *Ep.* xxx; *cf.* *Ep.* xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* xv. See also *Epp.* xii, xiii, xiv and xvi.



he had assembled in council, and was meant to insure complete unity of doctrine and practice.

The persecution of Decius was the shorter for being so violent. That emperor had acted as the scourge of God, and the instrument chosen by him for purifying the Church; but the Lord set aside the instrument when its work was done.

When St Cyprian wrote the above work, peace was already restored to the Church. He begins by expressing his joy in the fact and his admiration for the glorious phalanx of martyrs and confessors raised by the persecution. At the same time, he pours forth his grief over the disorders caused in the Church by the arrogance of those who had fallen.

"We need tears rather than words," he says, "to express our grief at the wounds inflicted on the Church and to mourn over the loss of so many of her members. Is there a man hard enough, cruel enough, forgetful enough of Christian charity, to witness with dry eyes the loss of so many brethren? . . . O my brethren, I pity you, I pity you! That I have been spared myself, and am now whole and sound, is no comfort in my sorrow, for the pastor feels most cruelly all the harm done to his flock. The enemy's darts have struck my own limbs and his cruel sword has pierced my very bowels."

The holy Bishop goes on in this sorrowful tone, bewailing the lack of fervour which had been the cause why so many Christians had opposed little or no resistance, and had sacrificed their faith on the altar of death.

Yet a fresh circumstance arose to make things worse. Many of the lapsed, encouraged by priests faithless to their calling, dared to return to the Church without having performed the smallest satisfactory penance. "Such as these," continues St Cyprian,

“having hardly left the devil’s altar, approach the sanctuary of the Lord with hands still soiled by incense offered to the gods. They have not yet digested the flesh of victims offered to idols, their very breath is yet tainted with the smell of these poisonous meats, and they would feed at once upon the Body of Christ ! . . . Despising the warnings of Scripture, before expiating their crime, before having even confessed it or having purified their conscience by sacrifice and by imposition of the Bishop’s hands, before having in any way appeased the indignation of God, they do violence to the Body and Blood of Christ, and their hands offend him now even more grievously than when they denied him.”

St Cyprian goes on to explain that absolution thus given (*i.e.*, by priests on their own account, and with no penance performed) is premature, being granted against the divine will, and that it is barren and deceptive; that, still more, it is hurtful to the souls of the lapsed; and, lastly, that the martyrs’ intercession is of no effect where true repentance is wanting. He also describes certain particular cases of persons who had dared to receive holy Communion without any show of repentance, relating, on the other hand, the example of others who had been so earnest in cleansing their consciences that they had freely confessed to having merely had a thought of sacrificing to idols.

But the chief concern of the holy Bishop throughout his book is with the very question of the health-giving transfer of satisfactions from one member of Christ’s mystical body to another under episcopal authority. “The Lord can pardon and show mercy to every man who repents, prays and chastises himself; he can give him the benefit of all that the martyrs have begged and that the prelates (*sacerdotes*) have done for him.”

St Cyprian finishes his book by earnestly exhorting

the lapsed to do penance, to confess their sins, and to have a sincere and effectual desire for contrition and expiation. He further promises that, at the appointed time, he will grant to all who have given sufficient signs of repentance, absolution of their faults and reconciliation with the Church.<sup>1</sup>

If we now read the decree of the Council of Trent on indulgences, promulgated in the twenty-fifth session, we shall see at once that the same spirit which animated the great Bishop of Carthage in his treatise *De Lapsis* guided the Fathers of that Council when publishing this decree. Both alike recognise the lawfulness of transferring the satisfactory merits of Christ and of his Saints to the neediest members of the Church. Both alike, too, bestow high praises on this great bond of Christian unity and of brotherly love. On the other hand, both recommend to pastors great discretion in dispensing these spiritual treasures of which they are merely the stewards. They moreover exhort the faithful to foster in themselves a spirit of true contrition and to continue in a state of grace, lest they should make void the gifts of God by their own unworthiness, and become yet more guilty by not holding the merits of our Lord and the satisfactions of the saints at their true value.

St Cyprian's just severity, in the matter of the admission of repentant apostates to ecclesiastical communion, naturally produced a reaction; many were influenced by him against the tendency of the relaxed clergy who desired to see sinners reconciled with no proof of true conversion. This reaction very soon led to excessive severity and to blameworthy "rigorism," especially on the part of some who had

<sup>1</sup> See Moehler, *Patrologie, Saint Cyprien*; O. Bardenhewer, *Patrology*, pp. 190 ff. (Herder, 1908); Cf. *Revue Apologétique*, vol. xxxix, p. 577; vol. iv, p. 625.

remained spotless in the trial. The Popes had to repress such blind and inexpedient zeal, and to recommend a moderate course of procedure, which should combine firmness in discipline with the maternal compassion of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

16. The fourth century opened with a new and more terrible persecution. The Emperor Diocletian, at the instigation of Galerius, whom he had made Cæsar with Constantius Chlorus, ordered that the Christian churches should be destroyed, the sacred books seized and burnt, the heads of ecclesiastical communities sought out, and all Christians, clergy and laity, compelled to offer incense to the false gods. The judges had directions to invent the most horrible tortures that they could think of,<sup>2</sup> and the prefects vied with each other as to who should best carry out the barbarous decree. The Church then counted innumerable martyrs among her children in all countries. Eusebius tells us that in one particular place so many Christians were put to death on the same day that the swords, worn out by the cruel slaughter, at last broke in the executioners' hands, and that they themselves, exhausted with fatigue, had to relieve each other by turns in their ghastly work.<sup>3</sup>

The persecution of Decius had produced the lapsed; that of Diocletian gave rise to traitors, *traditores*—the name given to Christians who had been weak enough to deliver to the enemy the sacred vessels, the Holy Scriptures and the liturgical books. Many of these repented and begged to be readmitted to the Church. Hope of forgiveness was held out to them,

<sup>1</sup> See in Mansi, t. i, col. 1269, ff., the fifteen penitential canons enacted by St Peter I Bishop of Alexandria, A.D. 306, when many who had fallen in the persecution asked to be reconciled as Easter was approaching.

<sup>2</sup> Euseb. *de Vita Constantini*, Book II, c. li.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.* Book VIII, c. ix.

but on condition of submitting to the appointed penance. Penance was the chief care of the Church with regard to offenders, the condition *sine qua non* of their reconciliation. We have proof of this in the penitential canons formulated at that epoch by St Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, for the purpose of determining the conduct to be observed towards penitents according to their degree of guilt.

Pope St Marcellinus (A.D. 296–304) in all probability did not depart from established custom in this matter. But the indulgence which he thought well to give to repentant *traditores* no doubt furnished the origin for a fable which arose later, in the time of Symmachus.

Marcellinus, it was said, yielding to temptation, had offered incense to idols and given over the Scriptures to the pagan emperor. On the discovery of this deed, so the story goes, a council of three hundred Bishops met in a cavern at Sinuessa. The guilty Pontiff, impelled by remorse of conscience, suddenly presented himself before the assembly in the garb of a penitent and made public confession of his fault, asking to be judged by the council. But the fathers proclaimed with one voice that the supreme See is judged by nobody: *Prima sedes a nemine judicatur*.<sup>1</sup>

Cardinal Baronius notwithstanding his usual acuteness was misled by the acts of the pretended council of Sinuessa so far as to give a certain degree of credit to this fable.<sup>2</sup> But the contradictions with which these acts swarm have caused other critics to reject them entirely and to acknowledge St Marcellinus as a martyr in a twofold sense—for his duty and also for his faith.<sup>3</sup>

The immediate successor of St Marcellinus on the

<sup>1</sup> St Augustine, *In Petilianum Donatistam*, c. xvi; *contra Litteras Petiliani*, Book II, c. xcii.

<sup>2</sup> *Annal.* ad ann. 302, n. 80; ad ann. 303, n. 88, ed. 2.

<sup>3</sup> See Tillemont, *Mémoires*, t. v, p. 28, and note 31. Duchesne, *Lib. Pontif.* t. i, p. lxxiv.



papal throne was St Marcellus (A.D. 304-310), of whom the *Liber Pontificalis* states that "he established in Rome twenty-five titles, *i.e.*, parochial churches, for the administration of baptism and penance, and for the burial of martyrs."<sup>1</sup>

This Pontiff also had to endure a cruel persecution on the score of indulgence to the lapsed; but for the very opposite reason to that alleged against St Marcellinus. The Pope exacted from all who had fallen into apostasy unmistakable signs of genuine repentance as the condition of reconciling them. A lapsed Christian, whose fall was quite inexcusable because he had denied his faith even before the persecution, rebelled against the Pontiff and soon found supporters enough to cause quarrels, disturbances and even murders in Rome. The Christian community was so seriously troubled that the Emperor Maxentius took this opportunity of exiling the Pope, whose prestige was already so great as to keep the emperor's authority at bay by his presence in Rome.

Pope St Damasus records this fact in the following inscription, placed by him on the tomb of St Marcellus:<sup>2</sup>

VERIDICVS RECTOR, LAPSOS QVIA CRIMINA FLERE  
PRAEDIXIT, MISERIS FVIT OMNIBUS HOSTIS AMARVS.  
HINC FVROR, HINC ODIVM SEQVITVR, DISCORDIA, LITES,  
SEDITIO, CAEDES, SOLVVNTVR FOEDERA PACIS.  
CRIMEN OB ALTERIVS CHRISTVM QVI IN PACE NEGAVIT,  
FINIBVS EXPVLSVS PATRIAE EST FERITATE TYRANNI.  
HAEC BREVITER DAMASVS VOLVIT COMPERTA REFERRE,  
MARCELLI VT POPVLVS MERITVM COGNOSCERE POSSIT.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "XXV titulos in Roma constituit quasi diocesis [*sic*] propter baptismum et poenitentiam et sepulturas martyrum."—In Marcello. Cf. *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne.

<sup>2</sup> The punctuation is our own.

<sup>3</sup> "For having ordered that the lapsed should be required to grieve for their crime, this faithful ruler was held by all these wretches for a cruel enemy. Hence came rage, hatred, discord,

17. St Eusebius succeeded St Marcellus in the supreme Pontificate (310). He had to bear the same opposition on the part of the lapsed, which his predecessor had met with. Heraclius—possibly the same renegade who had persecuted Marcellus—prejudiced the emperor against the new Pope, who was exiled in his turn, being sent to the shores of Sicily where he shortly died. We also owe the record of Eusebius's banishment and death to St Damasus, who placed an inscription very similar to the one above recorded on this martyr's tomb.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the maternal care of the Church for her stray sheep. She sought earnestly to bring them back to the fold and sighed for the hour of their return. But she exacted repentance on their part. Had she not done so, she would in fact have added to their guilt by sharing in their sins.

18. However, the Church's tender anxiety for her children was not confined to this mortal life; she followed them with her care beyond the tomb.

Whatever view she might entertain with regard to the eternal lot of those who had deserted the faith,<sup>2</sup>

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quarrels, sedition, murder; the bonds of peace are broken. For the crime of another, who in time of peace denied Christ, he was driven from his country by a tyrant's cruelty. Damasus has willed briefly to record these facts, that the people may know the merit of Marcellus."

<sup>1</sup> See Paul Allard, *Rome Souterraine*, Book III, c. v, Paris 1874. See also Is. Carini, *I Lapsi e la Deportazione in Sicilia del Papa S. Eusebio*, Rome, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> That there is no possibility of deliverance from hell has been always admitted by the universal Church. Hence Mr. Lea's pretension (*op. cit.* p. 329, n. 3) that the Church at some unknown period decided that "she was powerless to relieve souls in hell," is based only upon his imagination. In any case, it would have been well to give the date of this decision. As to the fable, so often refuted, of Trajan's being delivered from hell by St Gregory's prayers, we venture to refer readers to our own work, *Dell' Anima umana separata dal Corpo*, 2nd ed., Rome, 1901, pp. 212, ff. As to the words of the offertory in Masses for the Dead, "Libera

she felt confident that some at least among her children were already in a place of salvation. They were those who had served God with their whole heart, or who had given up their lives for him.<sup>1</sup> To such as these the faithful, still exiled on earth, might safely offer pious supplications; such, for instance, as the following:

ATTICE  
DORMI IN PACE  
DE TVA INCOLVMITATE  
SECVRVS ET PRO NOSTRIS  
PECCATIS PETE SOLLICITVS

“Atticus, sleep in peace, secure of thy salvation; and pray earnestly for [the remission of] our sins.”<sup>2</sup>

But yet there were many who had died with the sign of redemption, but whom the Church could scarcely deem sufficiently purified from this world’s imperfections to be fit for immediate contemplation of the thrice-holy God.

For this class of her children the Church begged the grant of “refreshment, light and peace—*locum refrigerii, lucis et pacis ut indulgeas deprecamur*.”<sup>3</sup> She well knew that the appointed state of the soul after death can undergo no essential change, but she also knew that a fire does exist wherein debts must be paid to the last farthing.<sup>4</sup> Hence it was that the

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animas omnium fidelium defunctorum de poenis inferni et de profundo lacu, libera eas de ore leonis, ne absorbeat eas Tartarus, ne cadant in obscurum,” every one knows that they refer to *the moment of death*.

<sup>1</sup> Apoc. i 9.

<sup>2</sup> Inscription of the beginning of the fourth century, discovered near St Sabina’s Church in Rome. See *Le Moniteur de Rome* for May 21, 1893.

<sup>3</sup> *Canon of the Mass*. Cf. Sacram. Gelas. apud Muratori, *Lit. Rom. Vet.* t. i, col. 749-790.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v 26.

ministers of the Church followed the mortal remains of the faithful in procession, chanting hymns;<sup>1</sup> and that on the stone which closed up the *loculus* were engraved a prayer and a wish, such, *e.g.*, as: *Spiritus tuus bene requiescat in Deo!* "May thy spirit rest well in God!"<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes these suffering souls came, in vision or dream, to beg special help from their friends to deliver them from torments. Then the faithful redoubled their prayers and supplications in the firm

<sup>1</sup> Constit. Ap. vi, 17; *cf.* Pitra, *Eccl. Graec.*, t. i, p. 344.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Lea (*op. cit.* p. 318) is obliged to acknowledge that one of the chief proofs of belief in Purgatory in the primitive Church is to be found in the practice, followed from the very earliest times, of performing religious exercises with the object of helping the souls of the dead. He admits (p. 324), as the teaching of St John Chrysostom, that the most effectual means of succouring the departed is to mention their names in the course of the sacred mysteries; and he does not deny (p. 325) that St Augustine spoke of such practices as accepted throughout the Church. Why, then, does he not give in to such convincing proofs? He gives as his reason (p. 318) that the doctrine of a particular judgement after death for each soul was not received by the Church from the earliest times; that the state of a soul after death was then looked upon as uncertain; and that, consequently, prayers for the dead had no object in the minds of the faithful except "to secure some greater measure of mercy in the final doom" (p. 319). On this subject one remark only is necessary. To pretend that belief in the particular judgement is a novelty in the Church is to be strangely forgetful of our Lord's teaching in the Gospel. Does not the parable of the bad rich man and Lazarus the beggar show the souls of these two men as judged immediately after death? One is carried by the angels "to Abraham's bosom," the other is buried in hell (Luke xvi 22); and Abraham can say definitely: "Between us and you there is fixed a great chaos, so that they who would pass from thence to you cannot, nor from thence come hither" (verse 26). St Paul teaches the same thing when he writes (Heb. ix 27): "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgement."

What Mr. Lea maintains respecting the Hebrew people is also gratuitous (p. 319). According to him the Jews must have received from the Persians both their custom of praying for the dead and their belief in a future life. This is in formal opposition to the Holy Scriptures, every page of which breathes a spirit of faith and hope in the life to come.

hope that they would thus relieve the pains of the dead, as was the case with St Perpetua.<sup>1</sup>

While this saint was awaiting in prison the day of her martyrdom, she had a vision. Her brother Dinocrates, a child of seven who had died of a terrible sore in the face, appeared to her coming from some dark place. He seemed to be devoured with thirst and to be in the greatest pain. Near him was a well, but the child was not tall enough to reach over its edge. All his efforts to get at the water were unavailing, and Perpetua could not help him, being separated from him in her vision by a precipice. She was deeply distressed at seeing her little brother suffering so severely. As she had prayed for him before, she now continued doing so night and day.

At last she was allowed to see Dinocrates again. This time he appeared happy, well clad, at rest, and with only a slight scar to show where the sore had formerly disfigured his face. The well was still there, but its brink was now so much lower that it reached only to the child's waist, and he was drawing water from it with a golden cup which never became empty even though he drank from it. When he had quenched his thirst, he went to play in the manner of children with great joy. Perpetua understood that he was delivered from suffering.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Fidebam me profecturam labori ejus."—*The Passion of St Perpetua*, n. vii, edited by J. Armitage Robinson, Cambridge.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* nn. vii and viii.

Mr. A. Robinson rejects the interpretation which most Catholic authors, following St Augustine (*De Anima ad Renatum*, Book I, c. x), gives of St Perpetua's vision. According to these, the soul of Dinocrates was suffering in Purgatory to expiate some slighter faults committed in life. Mr. Robinson, on the other hand (p. 29), holds that the child had died without baptism, and that the burning thirst he was trying to quench signified his great desire to receive that sacrament. Much might be said about an *indulgence* bearing on baptism, but we will confine ourselves here to one or two remarks. A theory which allowed of



But the Church could offer more precious gifts than simple prayers to the justice of God, for her

administering baptism after death would be formally opposed, first, to the nature of a sacrament, which is a means of sanctification for man in this life only, *i.e.*, when a *viator*; secondly, to the teaching of the Church, supported by reason, as to the permanent state of the soul after death; and, thirdly, to the doctrine of Holy Scripture, "If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be" (Eccles. xi 3). Moreover, as far as we know, there was no controversy as to the existence of Purgatory, or as to the impossibility of administering baptism after death, either in St Augustine's time or before it. Nothing therefore justifies Mr. Robinson in saying that the great Bishop of Hippo was compelled to adopt the interpretation which he presents of the vision "by the exigencies of controversy."

We should also wish to know on what authority Mr. Robinson positively states that St Perpetua's household was a pagan one, and what answer has he to give to those who say that, except the father, every member of her family was a Christian, or at least a Catechumen. Once more, we must be allowed to say that the argument drawn by Mr. Robinson, in favour of his opinion, from the ninth "similitude" of Herma's (xv 5) is not cogent, because there is no need to interpret that passage in the sense of baptism after death. See Le Nourry, *Dissertatio de Vita et Scriptis S. Hermae*, art. xix, and the passages to which he refers.

Mr. Lea (*op. cit.* p. 32) adopts the explanation proposed by Mr. Robinson, and holds that little Dinocrates had died without baptism. He adds that, had the child been baptised, he would not have been responsible for his sins. But is it not commonly held that at seven children reach the age of discretion? What is still more surprising is to find Mr. Lea (p. 322) attributing to St Perpetua's prayers the power of vicarious baptism, *Baptismus vicarius*, which he declares was a custom in primitive times. According to him, St Paul would have taught (1 Cor. xv 29) that a living person might have himself baptised for one who had died without being able to receive that sacrament. But St Paul's phrase "... What shall they do that are baptised for the dead. . .?" merely alludes to an erroneous practice and opinion among certain ignorant Christians or even heretics. Moreover, St Paul does not approve of it; he merely cites it that he may use it as an argument *ad hominem* in favour of the immortality of the soul and, consequently, of future resurrection, of which he is treating in this passage.

We cannot do better than quote here the words of St Thomas commenting on the above passage of St Paul: "Quidam tunc temporis volebant quod homines possent primo baptizari ut sibi

children's failings. She had the sacrifice of the altar, which is a substantial commemoration of the great sacrifice of the cross. Mass was then offered for the dead on the day of their burial or deposition, and was renewed at appointed anniversaries, as we learn from Tertullian.<sup>1</sup> Some persons were deprived of this help in punishment of deeds severely condemned by the Church;<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, refusal to believe in the efficacy of the great oblation was counted as heresy.<sup>3</sup> St Ambrose offered the sacrifice of the altar for Valentinian, for Theodosius and for his own brother Satyrus; and St Augustine wrote a book, *De Cura pro Mortuis*, "Care for the Dead," in which he testifies to the great age of this most Christian practice. St Ambrose says that "some celebrate this sacrifice on the third and on the thirtieth days, others on the seventh and on the fortieth."<sup>4</sup>

But love is fertile in resource. While the priests offered the holy sacrifice for the repose of the departed, *sacrificium pro dormitione*, the faithful believed that they might effectually help their friends, imprisoned in Purgatory, by their works of charity. Some of them abounded in the goods of this world; but the poor among them were very numerous. These primitive Christians were wont to gather at a feast of charity called *agape*, and feed the poor in the name of Jesus Christ, in memory of the dead. They felt no doubt

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ipsis remissionem peccatorum consequerentur, et iterum baptizabantur pro aliquo consanguineo suo defuncto, ut etiam post mortem dimitterentur ei peccata; et secundum hoc sit littera: 'Quid facient qui baptizantur pro mortuis,' scilicet consanguineis, pro quorum salute baptizantur, si non sit resurrectio mortuorum? Sed isti in aliquo commendari possunt, scilicet, in hoc quod fidem resurrectionis videbantur habere: sed in aliquo possunt reprehendi, in hoc scilicet quod unum credebant posse pro alio baptizari."—*Comment. in Ep. S. Pauli*, lectio iv.

<sup>1</sup> *De Corona militis*, c. iii.

<sup>2</sup> S. Cyprian, Ep. lxvi.

<sup>3</sup> S. Epiphanius, *Haeres.* 75.

<sup>4</sup> *De Obitu Theodosii*, n. iii.

that the merciful Judge, who has promised to reward even a cup of cold water given in his name,<sup>1</sup> would change the relief given to the poor of this world into a proportionate mitigation of suffering for their brethren in the next. Thus did the Senator Pammachius celebrate the funeral rites of Paulina, daughter of St Paula.<sup>2</sup>

With the same intention the faithful sometimes liberated several of their slaves, generously granting them "the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free,"<sup>3</sup> and begging the supreme Judge to break the bonds of their friends in Purgatory and admit them to their inheritance in the eternal kingdom. The Christians performed all these practices for the deliverance of souls, in full confidence that God would let their good works avail for the dead.<sup>4</sup> They could not believe that death had broken the bonds of love that had united them on earth. The Church was well aware of this confidence; and she, the mother of truth, encouraged and approved of it. Nay, she did more. She observed among her children the rapid growth of a merciful desire to help the souls of their departed brethren. She felt that the voice of nature was the voice of God, and that she must help their work of charity. She began to use the keys of the kingdom of heaven that had been delivered to her, for the dead as well as for the living, for were not those also part of the great Christian flock?<sup>5</sup>

In this way the Church gradually came to use her power of granting indulgences for the benefit of the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x 42.      <sup>2</sup> St Paulinus, Ep. xiii, 11.      <sup>3</sup> Gal. iv 31.

<sup>4</sup> See Armellini, *Gli antichi Cimiteri Romani*, Rome, 1893, p. 24, where several inscriptions are quoted in support of the above doctrine.

<sup>5</sup> The reader should here bear in mind what has been said above (p. 88), that the Church helps the souls in Purgatory through indulgences by way of suffrage, not of absolution.

holy souls in Purgatory. She began to come to their help by her pardons, just as she had hitherto done by her prayers and sacrifices. The practice was no innovation or usurpation, but the single evolution of a right possessed by the Church from the beginning. For he who governs the world and appoints the return of the seasons had determined that the Spouse of Christ should, in due time, throw open the treasure of indulgences more widely to her children, and give them express leave to make use of them not for their own profit only, but also for the aid of their friends departed. This is what we shall see in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER III

### TRANSITION

#### *From the Fifth to the Tenth Century*

“ So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up whilst he knew it not.”—*Mark* iv 26, 27.

The Church in time of peace—Organisation of penitential discipline—The Councils enjoin it—False “ Penitentials ” rejected—Penitential canons of various Councils—Severity of these penances—Redemptions and commutations stepping-stones to indulgences—*Metanoiae* and prostrations—Pilgrimages, especially to Rome—Their relation to indulgences—Pardons granted by letters—The Christian stations—Their origin and development—Processions and litanies—Indulgences attached to visiting the stations—The *Agnus Dei*—Origin of Gregorian and privileged altars—Confraternities for suffrages for the dead—Pious foundations.

AT the beginning of the fourth century a lasting peace had begun to dawn upon the Catholic Church. The ministers of Christ’s religion were able to come forth from the catacombs where they had often been compelled to remain—buried alive, so to speak. They now began to celebrate the sacred mysteries of their worship in the light of day. Then were the underground regions exchanged for sumptuous temples, rivalling those of Jupiter in Rome and of Apollo at Corinth in richness and beauty. Then, too, did the confessors of the faith quit their prisons, bearing on their bodies the glorious marks of torment endured for Christ.

For a noble-hearted and generous prince had



succeeded the barbarous tyrants who had, for three centuries, treated Rome and her people with a cruelty worthy of the Carthaginians in their most savage days. In the year 313 Constantine the Great, with his colleague Licinius, promulgated an edict in favour of the Christians, ordering that full liberty should be allowed them and that all their possessions should be restored.

But even then persecutions did not wholly cease. They were carried on for some time longer in the provinces, especially in those most distant from the heart of the empire, and martyrs were found even in the reign of Constantine. Half a century later a Roman emperor died whose hands had been steeped in Christian blood, and who was able to boast that, if the Church of Christ had been a mortal institution, he would have finally destroyed it. But Julian the Apostate, as this enemy of the Christian faith was named, did not gain the victory. After a desperate contest of three years' duration (A.D. 361-363) he acknowledged himself conquered by the Galilean, and died miserably.

Up to the eighth century the Eastern Churches had to endure incessant underhand provocations, and sometimes even actual persecutions. The successors of Constantine on the Byzantine throne forgot that they were only exterior bishops, as the expression then was, whose duty consisted simply in protecting and defending the Church. They invaded the sanctuary and professed to dictate decisions on theological questions concerning the Son of God, the honour due to holy images and the procession of the Holy Ghost. With some few exceptions, they forgot their divine mission as emperors and set themselves to torture the orthodox Christians and put their pastors to death.

Hence, during the whole of this period, the Church continued to have her martyrs and her confessors of

the faith; and the custom of going to them in their prisons and of obtaining dispensation from canonical penance through their intercession lasted accordingly, at least in places where there were lawful pastors to grant such favours.

2. Canonical penances, however, were still in full force and remained so, even long after persecution had ceased. Side by side with the imposition of these penances we invariably find the Bishops exercising their power of shortening their duration as they judged it expedient before God to do so.<sup>1</sup>

In fact—and this is an important point to remember—canonical penances were never formally abolished. They fell into disuse, especially during the crusades as will be seen presently. But even then and later too, the Church always protested that although she had allowed a mitigation of her penitential code, she by no means intended thereby to depart from the spirit that it embodied and that she had in mind when establishing it. The holy Council of Trent makes special mention of public penance,<sup>2</sup> and St Charles Borromeo, through whose pastoral ministry the decrees of that Council were put into practice with such wonderful success, included in his instructions to confessors a brief account of the ancient canons for the guidance of his priests in the imposition of sacramental penance.<sup>3</sup>

In the fifth and sixth centuries penitential discipline was regularly organised. In Rome the institution of penitentiary priests, already referred to, gave rise to a regular office, the obligations of which were definitely fixed. Socrates says that from the time of

<sup>1</sup> On canonical penance, abundant information can be had in John Morinus, *Commentarius historicus de Sacramento Poenitentiae*, lib. ix, Ven., 1702, pp. 414 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Sess. XXIV, c. viii, de Reform.

<sup>3</sup> *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, Patavii, 1754, vol. i, p. 445.

the Emperor Decius, who died A.D. 251, there was, in every church in Rome, a priest appointed to hear the confession of those who had fallen into sin after baptism.<sup>1</sup> This official was then charged with the penitents, and to him belonged the care of seeing that the penitential discipline was carried out.

Anastasius the Librarian records of Pope St Simplicius, A.D. 468-483, that he appointed certain priests to be the directors of penitents and to receive their *exomologesis* or confession at St Peter's, St Paul's and St Lawrence's.<sup>2</sup> From Rome this custom passed on to other Churches.<sup>3</sup>

The Bishop, however, could not entirely resign to others one of his own chief functions, and it was his custom to preside over the penitents' exercises, encouraging the fervent, spurring on the lukewarm and giving useful guidance to all.

The penitential exercises were contained in books called "Penitentials," which were official manuals arranged expressly for the use of penitents, and varying with different countries. Amongst "Penitentials" that have been preserved, that of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, is worthy of special mention as affording valuable evidence respecting ancient religious customs in England.

Theodore had formerly been a monk at Tarsus in Cilicia. His wisdom and learning caused Pope Vitalian to choose him in 668 to occupy the see of Canterbury. He was the first Bishop to be primate

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Eccl.*, Book V, c. xix. See also Sozomen, Book VII, c. xvi; and Nicephorus Callistus, Book XII, c. xxviii. Baronius, ad ann. 255, § 9, does not accept Socrates' statement: but Tillemont, t. 1, iv, p. 42, *Saint Cyprien*, art. 24, inclines to think that this passage refers to a priest of inferior rank, charged by the Bishop with the care of penitents but only under his own supervision.

<sup>2</sup> Du Cange, under the word "Poenitentia."

<sup>3</sup> See the *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, Book VII, n. 132; Canciani, t. iii, p. 317.

over the other English sees. He founded several schools for ecclesiastical training, and up to his death, which took place in 690, he was zealously occupied in preserving the deposit of faith and traditional discipline in all its purity. It was with this object that he wrote his "Penitential" or abridgement of canon law, intended to regulate the imposition of penance according to the kind of sins committed. This compendium, in the form in which it has come down to us, is both incomplete and interpolated; but taken as a whole it suffices to give the reader an idea of the severe ecclesiastical discipline at that period.<sup>1</sup>

According to these books the penitents were condemned to many painful exercises. Prayer, fasting and alms were, of course, almost always included in them, but a variety of local practices were often added to them. In some instances, especially in the case of homicides, the penitents had an iron chain, called "ferrum poenitentiale," bound round their loins, and they were ordered to go thus chained on pilgrimages to the most noted shrines.<sup>2</sup> In some churches—at Sens, for instance—they gave the penitents a ball of wool, which they were to take back on Maundy Thursday.<sup>3</sup> We have already seen that this was the day for the public solemn reconciliation. But it is not

<sup>1</sup> What remains of this "Penitential," as well as other writings of Theodore, will be found in the edition by Jacques Petit, Paris, 1677; in the *Spicilegium* of Dom Luc d'Achéry, vol. ix, and in the appendix to the sixth volume of the *Councils* of P. Labbe, 1671. See also Migne, *Nouvelle Encyclopédie Théologique*, t. xxiii, Paris, 1859, under the heading "Théodore."

<sup>2</sup> Martène, *Thes. Anecd.* See the *Lexicon Manuale ad Script. med. et inf. Latin.*, by Maigne d'Arnis. Published by Migne, 1858.

<sup>3</sup> Du Cange, under head "Poenitentia." But Maundy Thursday was also called "Dies Indulgentiae," or "Absolutionis dies," or even "Absolutus dies Jovis." *Ibid.* under word "Absolutio."

improbable that by degrees the custom arose of granting a species of pardon or indulgence without waiting for the Maundy Thursday ceremony. That indulgence served as a preparation for the solemn reconciliation. Thus at Cologne the day chosen for granting pardon to the penitents was Palm Sunday, called for that reason "*dies indulgentiae*," which enabled them to spend the time between that day and Thursday in preparing to receive the Body of Christ as a pledge of perfect reconciliation.

3. In the course of time, however, fervour began to cool, and Christians grew more and more inclined to evade canonical penance. Hence the Church was compelled, in her Councils, both to recall the penitential practices and, by severe enactments, to insist on their being observed.

The decrees of the Council of Châlon-sur-Saône, held A.D. 813 by the Bishops of Gallia Lugdunensis, are a striking proof of the care which the Church took not to allow this wholesome practice to fall into abeyance.

"The use of traditional penance," says the Council, "has been abolished in many places, wherefore it is necessary that the Church should implore the emperor's help in causing public sinners to be subjected to public penance, and in seeing that they are excommunicated and reconciled in accordance with the canons."<sup>1</sup>

"Some persons," the Council further says, "do not fully confess their sins. They must be admonished to confess sins of thought no less than exterior faults.<sup>2</sup> The confession must be made not only to God but to the priests; and when judgement is given, care must be taken that no one is led astray by any passion."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C. xxv.

<sup>2</sup> C. xxxii.

<sup>3</sup> Cc. xxxiii and xxxiv.



Again, "In performing their penance, many persons care less for obtaining remission of their sins than for arriving at the time fixed for concluding the penance; and if the use of wine and flesh meat has been forbidden them, they obtain other food and drink of a more delicate kind. The true penitent deprives himself of all bodily pleasures. Others, again, sin deliberately thinking to efface their sin by almsgiving. One should not sin in order to give alms; there is rather need to give alms because we have sinned."<sup>1</sup>

"Penance," concluded the Council, "must be imposed according to Scripture and the Church's use. The books called 'Penitentials' must be wholly set aside, seeing that they contain certain errors, while their authors remain unknown. Hence they only serve to mislead the sinner by imposing light and trifling penances for grave faults."<sup>2</sup>

Thus did the Church desire to see the faithful submit to the penances sanctioned by venerable custom and tradition.

4. But what were those "Penitentials" condemned so severely by the Fathers of Châlon? They were booklets enjoining a shorter and milder form of penance than had hitherto been customary in the Church. These adulterated codes did not, in fact, answer the purpose that the Church had in view when establishing her penitential discipline. She intended the penalty to be proportionate to the offence, so that the mystical body of Christ should by its means be purified both from the evil of sin and the corruption of vice.<sup>3</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> C. xxxv.

<sup>2</sup> C. xxxviii.

<sup>3</sup> "Οἱ γὰρ ἅγιοι πατέρες ἡμῶν μετανόιας τρόπους ἐκθέμενοι καὶ ἐπιτιμίων ἰδέας ἀναλόγους τοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἁμαρτήμασιν ἔσπευδον δι' αὐτῶν ἀνακαθαίρειν τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἐκκλησίας.—Our saintly Fathers, by laying down the rules of penance and fixing the measure of punishment corresponding to man's sins, sought to cleanse the Body of the Church." C. Joann. Antioch., ed. Cotelier, c. i. See Du Cange, under the word "Poenitentia."

these new books only deceived the faithful by promising an easy and premature pardon.

We find, therefore, both Bishops and Councils, for the most part, energetically opposing these innovations. Thus the sixth Council of Paris, A.D. 829, rejects them, and, like the Council of Châlon, recognises the need of keeping to the true penitential canons.<sup>1</sup> Halitgaire, Bishop of Arras and Cambrai, who had taken part in this Council, wrote a treatise on penance, wherein he fixed the penances to be henceforth imposed. These, it must be acknowledged, are much milder than those prescribed in earlier canons.

5. As we are considering the question of canonical penance, we shall venture here to set forth at some length the penitential regulations of the tenth and eleventh centuries, although this may seem an encroachment on the period to be considered in the next chapter.

In 894 the Council held at Trebur, near Mainz, renews the penitential canons of the first ages, and calls to mind those of Ancyra, as also St Basil's letters to Amphilochius.

Voluntary homicide shall be punished with seven years' penance. For forty days the culprit shall be excluded from the Church, during which time he shall fast on bread and water, go barefoot and wear no more garments than decency requires. He is forbidden to carry arms or use a carriage; he is to live separate from his wife, and to abstain from all intercourse with other Christians. When forty days are over, he must still keep outside the Church, and abstain from meat, cheese, wine and honey. If he should be ill or be obliged to go on a journey, he may "redeem" his abstinence on Tuesdays, Thursdays

<sup>1</sup> C. xliii, Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, Book XLVII, n. 24.

and Saturdays by giving an alms of two *sous*,<sup>1</sup> or by feeding three poor men. At the end of a year he is allowed to enter the church, but has to go on with the penance for two more years, except that he is authorised to redeem the three abstinence days mentioned. For the four following years he has to keep three "quarantines," or Lents annually, before the feasts of Easter, of St John the Baptist and of Christmas. Except for this he is only bound, during these four years, to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, with the power of redeeming the Wednesdays. Only after the seventh year is he to be reconciled with the Church and allowed to communicate.<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of the tenth century Atto, Bishop of Vercelli, published a "Capitulary" of one hundred articles. In the ninetieth article he recommends parish priests to take note of the signs of conversion and repentance shown by the penitents. If the latter have fulfilled their penance with extraordinary signs of fervour, or again if they are in danger of death, the priests are directed to have recourse to the Bishop, or, in his absence, to the "priest-cardinals" (the *presbyterium* of the Cathedral Church), to obtain from them absolution before the time fixed by the Canons was completed.<sup>3</sup>

The letters of Alexander II (A.D. 1061-1073) contain frequent allusions to canonical penances, and to the Bishops' right of remitting a portion of them.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reader will easily understand that this sum is not to be taken according to its present value, the relative worth of money having undergone a considerable diminution in the course of time. Though it is difficult to say exactly what a *sou* was worth in the ninth century, it is certain that it was not the trifling sum which it is now, and a comparative estimate can be drawn from the fact that the giving of two *sous* is here regarded as an equivalent to the feeding of three poor.

<sup>2</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, Book LIV, n. 24. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Book LV, n. 55.

<sup>4</sup> Ep. xxxvii, cf. Fleury, Book LXI, n. 76.

At that time St Peter Damian, Bishop of Ostia, who worked so zealously for the reform of the clergy, complained bitterly that false penitential canons had replaced the true ones, and had brought about a weakening of discipline.<sup>1</sup> St Gregory VII, too, (A.D. 1073-1085) protested against the use of insufficient penances,<sup>2</sup> and the Council of Piacenza echoed the lamentations of the Pontiff.

There were also "penitentials" exclusively for regulars. These provided, not for serious offences which it was taken for granted would not be committed by monks, but for slighter faults such as they might be guilty of. St Columban, who came from the celebrated monastery of Banchor to introduce religious life in the Vosges, in France, appoints, as punishment for violations of the rule, scourgings, varying in amount according to the fault.<sup>3</sup>

6. The canonical penances were very severe. They consisted chiefly in humiliations, fasts, flagellations, disciplines and other austerities. Sometimes the Bishops added to the penalties prescribed by the canons. We read, for instance, of a certain Leontardus, guilty of homicide, who was forbidden by his Bishop to communicate except at death. He was also to abstain from flesh and wine, except on Sundays and feast days; and he was further forbidden to cut his hair, to marry, to associate with others, to give orders to his slaves, to enjoy his own possessions, and to receive a fief from his liege lord. Pope John VIII (A.D. 872-888), hearing of this penance, feared that the penitent might not be able to stand such severity, and wrote to the Bishop telling him that he thought the penalty too heavy, and bidding him diminish it lest the culprit should give way to despair.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, Book LIX, n. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Book LXIII, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Rohrbacher, *Hist. de l'Église*, Book XLVII., n. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, Book LII, n. 47.

King Edgar of England (A.D. 957-975), having committed a grave sin, was condemned by St Dunstan of Canterbury to a penance of seven years, during which time he was to fast twice a week, give abundant alms and abstain from wearing his crown. Matthew of Westminster tells how Blessed Ælfege, on Ash Wednesday, dismissed the penitents from the church-porch, exhorting them to consecrate their Lent by fasting and by abstaining not only from the pleasures forbidden them, but even from such as their status would allow them without sin (A.D. 974).

Sometimes the Church imposed penance on sinners without their having asked to be admitted among the penitents, and threatened them with excommunication if they refused to submit. Thus Stephen, Count of Auvergne (A.D. 867), having violently driven the Bishop of Clermont, Sigonius, from his See, and put an interloper in his place, was ordered by Pope St Nicholas I to restore the prelate to his See at once, and further to present himself to the legates who were to preside at a Council about to be held, to answer before them for this crime and others that he had committed. "Failing which," adds the Pope, "we forbid you the use of flesh and wine until you come to Rome and present yourself before us."<sup>1</sup>

Although we may safely say that the penitential discipline was practised on a large scale in the period we are now considering, yet the documents we possess are relatively few. This deficiency may be partly attributed to the rarity of the works that have come down to us from that period; but perhaps it is also partly due to a certain liturgical respect which covered, as with a veil, the administration of penance. We have a trace of this *Disciplina arcani* or "law of the secret" in Pope St Nicholas I's answer (A.D. 866) to the

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, Book LI, n. 8.



Bulgarians. These people, lately converted to the Catholic faith together with their king, Bogoris, asked the Pope to teach them what they ought to believe and practise. We gather from the Pope's reply that the penitential canons were still a secret, known to the priests only.<sup>1</sup>

7. But the faithful were not always able to bear such penances. The weakness of their health or the exigencies of their calling often made it impossible for them to observe such a prolonged time of probation and austerity. Hence the Church allowed the introduction of *redemptions* or *commutations*.<sup>2</sup> The more rigorous practices were replaced by exercises of a kind less hard upon human weakness, the severer penances being dispensed with in the name of Christ, and made up for by the merits drawn from the infinite treasure of his Blood.<sup>3</sup>

We have numerous examples of such commutations.

The Council of Ancyra had already sanctioned a certain commutation of public penance for deacons

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, *Hist. Eccl.*, Book L, n. 51. An observation should be made here. If in the ninth century, when the Christian religion was already spread all over the world, the penitential canons were still a secret known to priests only, *a fortiori* we must infer that the administration of private penance, or of the sacrament of penance, including auricular confession and private absolution, must have been shrouded in secrecy in the first centuries of the Church. Besides, is not secrecy an essential accompaniment of this sacrament? The absence of precise documents on private penance in the primitive Church should therefore constitute no argument against its existence.

<sup>2</sup> *Cf. Dict. Theol.* VII, 1602; *Dict. Apol.* II, 727.

<sup>3</sup> As we shall see later, commutations or redemptions of penance are a step towards the actual form of an indulgence. Therefore, as far as that goes, it is accurate to say with Mr. Lea (*op. cit.* p. 9), that these "redemptions were the precursors of indulgences." But it is none the less a serious error to carry back the origin of indulgences no further than to these commutations, as is proved by the foregoing chapters of the present work.

who, after having fallen away once, had afterwards remained firm during the persecutions.<sup>1</sup>

In the middle of the eighth century the Council of Cloveshoe, in England, mentions the custom of commuting penance for alms (A.D. 747). But the Fathers of that assembly looked upon that custom with strong suspicion. These Bishops, with Cuthbert Archbishop of Canterbury at their head, regarded it as a novel expedient and a dangerous practice—*nova adinventio, periculosa consuetudo*—rather than as a wholesome institution. “We ought not,” they say, “to give alms with the object of mitigating or commuting the penitential satisfaction, which consists in fasts and other works of expiation, and is imposed by the priest of God on the sinner for his failings, according to the orders of the sacred canons. No doubt it is very useful to give alms every day; but we ought not on that account to relax the abstinence or neglect the fast prescribed by the Church, since without the observance of these commands no sin can be remitted.”<sup>2</sup>

However, in spite of such protestations, commutations and redemptions of penances soon took the form of a regular system. Thus, among the seventy-seven “canons” drawn up by King Edgar for the pastors of the Church, there is one showing how a penitent, in case of illness, may redeem a fast imposed on him. One day’s fast may be commuted by an alms of one penny, or by the recitation of one hundred and twenty psalms, or, again, by sixty genuflections and sixty *Pater nosters*. A two days’ fast was replaced by a Mass, and so on.

The “Penitential” of Theodore, mentioned above,

<sup>1</sup> See Wiseman, *Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*, lect. xii.

<sup>2</sup> Can. 26, Mansi, *Sacr. Conc. ampliss. coll.* t. xii, p. 404. Florence, 1766.

shows by what means a penitent, condemned to bread and water for a year, could redeem one day of this severe fast. He will have a Mass sung for him, at which he is to be present, offering the bread and wine to the priest with his own hands, and answering all the liturgical salutations, etc., himself; in return for which he may on the same day eat and drink whatever he likes, except meat, bacon and wine. He may do this as often as he chooses. He may also gain the same advantage by giving a certain appointed alms according to the circumstances of his position, either for the redemption of slaves, or for divine worship, or to feed the poor supported by the Church.<sup>1</sup>

To Christians destitute of worldly goods Venerable Bede's Penitential grants the following means of redeeming one day's fast. They should sing the psalm *Beati immaculati in via* three times, and the *Miserere* six times, and prostrate on the ground seventy times, chanting the Lord's Prayer each time.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman Penitential was nearly as rigorous. For the same purpose as above it prescribed the singing of fifty psalms kneeling in the church, and the feeding of a poor person; or else the making of a hundred genuflections in the church, accompanied by appropriate penitential prayers. For the illiterate it directed the giving of threepence by a rich penitent, or of one by a poor man; the use of flesh meat, bacon and wine being forbidden in all cases.<sup>3</sup>

In Germany Burchard, Bishop of Worms, who died in 1026, speaks of these redemptions or commutations of penances, particularly by prayers and

<sup>1</sup> *Canones Poenitentiales cum notis Antonii Augustini*, Venice, 1584, tit. ix, cap. xxviii, xxix, xxx.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, tit. ix, cap. xxxi; cf. Canciani, t. ii, p. 274. See also the Gallican Penitential, in Mabillon, *Musaeum Ital.* i, p. 392, Paris, 1724.

<sup>3</sup> *Can. Poenit.* tit. IX, c. xxv, foll.

alms, in his celebrated *Decree*, a canonical collection made by him for the restoration of ecclesiastical penance.

8. Prostrations were among the exercises most commonly practised at that time by penitents, whether they voluntarily embraced the state or had it imposed upon them by the Church. The connexion of prostrations with penitential discipline caused ecclesiastical writers of the East to use the term "penances," *μετάνοιαι*, *στρωταὶ μετάνοιαι*, for signifying the prostrations done by penitents; and the Western writers, latinising this word, made "*metanoea*" the synonym of prostration. It is in this sense that St Peter Damian uses it when he describes with admiration the "thousand *metanoeae*" made by St Dominic the Hermit during his recitation of the psalter.<sup>1</sup> Genuflections (*ἐδαφίαιναι γονυκλισίαι*) were also in frequent use amongst penitents. Monks had a mode of saluting by a profound inclination,<sup>2</sup> somewhat after the manner of a prostration, whence they came to use the word *metanoea* also for "salutation."

The St Dominic above-mentioned was a man of extraordinary austerity. He was surnamed *Loricatus*, because he continually wore an iron cuirass for penance. He died at Luceola in Umbria in 1062. St Peter Damian, who had been his confessor, speaks of the great mortifications that he practised to redeem the many years of penance which he had voluntarily undertaken.

Having learnt that a year's penance might be redeemed by reciting twelve psalms eighty times with

<sup>1</sup> "A depresso homine mille *metanoeas* in uno Psalterio fieri admiratus expavi." *Vita*, cap. viii, ap. Migne, S. Petri Damiani Opera, t. i, p. 1024.

<sup>2</sup> A bending of the body, from the waist, till the hands touch the knees: still in use in many Religious Orders.

arms stretched cross-wise, he often practised this exercise both for himself and for others. Also, he was in the habit of striking his flesh with both hands whilst chanting the psalter twice over. In short, he waged war to the death with all the enemies of his soul.

During Lent he often condemned himself to a hundred years' penance, which he performed by chanting the psalter twenty times whilst scourging himself. It was reckoned in those days that three thousand lashes, *scopae*, corresponded to a year's penance. Now St Dominic Loricatus had calculated that he could give himself a thousand strokes of the discipline while he chanted ten psalms; therefore, by scourging himself during the recitation of 150 psalms or a whole psalter, he could perform five years' penance; and the chanting of twenty psalters, accompanied by scourging, sufficed for the hundred years' penance.

St Peter Damian assures us that St Dominic could easily get through this penance in six days. Once even, at the beginning of Lent, this generous soul begged his director to impose on him a thousand years' penance, and St Peter Damian says that he accomplished it before that season was over.<sup>1</sup>

Now the *redemptions*, *compensations* or *commutations* had the sanction of the Church, sometimes a tacit sanction, but mostly explicit. It would be both absurd and impious to pretend that the Church wished to deceive her children, by persuading them that their penalty was fully performed, and that they had satisfied the justice of God when it was not so. Hence, we must conclude that in virtue of these commutations, that is by reciting the prayers, giving the alms, or submitting to whatever penance was imposed, the sinner, supposing him truly contrite for his sins,

<sup>1</sup> Migne, t. ii, *Sanctorum vitae*, c. viii.



was freed from his debt to God after his guilt was forgiven.<sup>1</sup>

Are we now to regard these *redemptions and commutations* as indulgences in the strict formal sense of the word? The resemblance is so close that one would appear unduly critical in calling the point in question. But many Catholic scholars are of the opinion that, although these practices were implicitly indulgences, they are not strictly to be considered such explicitly and formally, *i.e.*, in the explicit intention of the ecclesiastical authorities who granted them. They were certainly a commutation of onerous penances into lighter ones, but it is not established in what measure the Church intended to supply the deficiency from the treasury of the Church. Similarly, with regard to the pilgrimages of which we are going to speak: the reduction of penance might have been granted having in mind the penitent's laborious journey.<sup>2</sup>

9. Pilgrimages to venerable sanctuaries, particularly in Jerusalem and in Rome, date back to the farthest antiquity. It would be very difficult to say when the faithful began to visit our divine Saviour's sepulchre at Jerusalem, and the sacred tombs of the apostles in Rome. In 351, under the episcopate of St Cyril, a wonderful event took place, which is recorded by contemporary writers. A luminous cross appeared in the sky above Jerusalem; it reached from

<sup>1</sup> On the subject of these redemptions and commutations of penances the reader may consult Du Cange, *Glossarium med. et infim. Lat.*, under the word "Poenitentia." See also N. Paulus, "Die Anfänge des Ablasses," in *Geschichte, etc.*, I Band, p. 1 foll. Some authors, and among them Muratori (*Antiq. Ital. diss. LXVIII*, t. iii, p. 358, foll.), have forgotten that repentance was a necessary condition, according to the intention of the Church, for the validity of these commutations and mitigations, and therefore saw in them merely "a material tax for obtaining absolution" (*cf. Trattato storico—dogmatico—critico delle Indulgenze*, Genoa, 1798).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Galtier, *de Penit.* § 609, *Dict. Apol.* II, col. 729.

Calvary to the Mount of Olives, a length of about three miles with width in proportion. Now we are told that there were so many pilgrims in the town at that time, that the fact was soon known everywhere, and many Jews and pagans were converted to Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

In the eighth century the Venerable Bede wrote a book upon the holy places, in which he speaks of frequent pilgrimages from England to Rome. The *Saxon Chronicle* too notes, as an event worthy of remark, that in the year 689 no pilgrim had been to Rome, so that Alfred had to send his letters by two special messengers.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 721 St Willibald and some of his fellow-countrymen undertook a journey to the holy places, of which we have an interesting and detailed account written by a nun of Heidenheim at the saint's dictation.<sup>3</sup>

In our own day, with the many conveniences and facilities of transport we have, we are surprised when some hundreds of pilgrims go together to the Holy Land. But in those days great pilgrimages were made by thousands of people, coming from afar, who almost always went on foot, and often had to make their road through trackless countries.

Next in value to a visit to the sanctuaries of Jerusalem, devout Christians counted the pilgrimage to Rome, *ad limina Apostolorum*, i.e., to the tombs of SS. Peter and Paul, with homage done to St Peter's successor. It would take too long to enumerate the

<sup>1</sup> See Socrat. Book II, c. 28; Sozom. Book IV, c. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Chron. Sax. p. 90. Lingard, *Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, c. ix, n. 5, note 68, Philadelphia ed.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* On the indulgences granted in course of time by the Popes for the pilgrimage to the Holy Places, see N. Paulus, "Die Ablässe berühmter Kirchen und Wallfahrtsorte." In *Geschichte*, etc., III Band, ix, p. 283.

groups of devout *Romers*,<sup>1</sup> who betook themselves to the Eternal City, from the day when the two Apostles consecrated what had been the scene of so many crimes by their blood.

The shrine of St Martin of Tours was an object of great veneration throughout France; and the Council of Chalon, referred to above, compares it to the sacred tombs of the apostles. Spain had her sanctuary of St James of Compostella, and history has made every one familiar with the universal devotion shown to that saint, the brother of St John the beloved.<sup>2</sup>

England had the pilgrimage to St Alban's tomb, the most celebrated shrine in Great Britain, which the Bishops of Troyes and Auxerre visited about A.D. 430, when on a mission to England concerning the Pelagian heresy. On that occasion the Bishop of Auxerre, St Germanus, had the tomb of the martyr opened, and placed within it relics of all the apostles and of several martyrs brought by him from various places. He took away with him a little of the dust that had been steeped in the martyr's blood. On his return to his own episcopal town he had a splendid Church built in honour of St Alban.<sup>3</sup>

Another famous English shrine was that of St Peter at Peterborough. History tells of the numerous pilgrims that visited it, among whom we find the names of Edward III and his wife Philippa, of Queen Isabella and of the Black Prince, who had mingled with the

<sup>1</sup> From the Latin *Romeus*: another form was *Romipeta* (whence old French *romieu*, *romier* and *romipète*). It was the name given to those who made the pilgrimage to Rome. See the *Lexicon ad Scriptores mediae et infimae Latinitatis*, by Maigne d'Arnis, in Migne, *l.c.* See also *Instructio Romipetarum* in Amort, *op. cit.* Part I, n. 78. Pilgrims to the Holy Land were called *Palmers*, from their carrying in their hands palm-branches, Lat. *palmarius* or *palmifer*.

<sup>2</sup> Amort, *op. cit.* Part II, sect. iv, n. 70, pp. 227, 228.

<sup>3</sup> See Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, Book XXV, n. 17.

vast throng of the peasants and others who went to pray there.

Later on, Canterbury took the first rank among English shrines, as Chaucer tells us;<sup>1</sup> and, if the complete history of that sanctuary were written, it would bring out very clearly both the powerful intercession of the glorious martyr, St Thomas, and the importance that the English people of that time attached to the pardons that they gained by making pilgrimages to this hallowed tomb.

10. At first pilgrimages had no object beyond the devotion of the faithful to our Saviour's life and death, or their desire for a Saint's prayers. But when penitential discipline became relaxed, pilgrimages acquired a new meaning. With the consent of the Church, they were sometimes used instead of more rigorous practices, and Morinus is of opinion that by the eighth century they had begun to take the place of canonical penances.<sup>2</sup>

However, what chiefly induced the faithful to undertake these long journeys was the hope of obtaining the words of pardon and absolution from the lips of the prelates.

In 664 when the great abbey-church of Peterborough was finished, Wolfhere, King of Mercia, obtained leave from Pope Vitalian for all who could not go to Rome to fulfil their vows at that sanctuary. By a rescript, addressed to King Ethelred, Pope Agatho confirmed this grant adding a fresh concession: the

<sup>1</sup> Then longë folk to go on pilgrimages,  
And palmers for to seeke strange strands,  
To ferne hallows couth in sundry lands;  
And specially, from every shire's end  
Of Engleland, to Canterbury they wend,  
The holy blissfull Martyr for to seek  
That them hath holpen, when that they were sick.

—THE CANTERBURY TALES, "The Prologue."

<sup>2</sup> Morin., *de Poenit.*, Book VII, c. xv.

pilgrim might "receive from Christ and St Peter, from the Abbot and monks the same absolution that he would have received if he had gone to Rome."<sup>1</sup>

Instances of both men and women who went on pilgrimage to the Eternal City, with the object of there receiving absolution for their sins, are very numerous. One case was that of a certain Eriartus, who had killed a monk in Holy Orders belonging to the Abbey of St Riquier, and who went to Rome to get absolution (A.D. 867). Pope St Nicholas I ordered him to do twelve years of penance. For three years he was to remain at the church door and there to weep for his sins; for the fourth and fifth years he was to remain among the *audientes* without receiving Holy Communion; for the last seven years he might communicate on the great feasts, but without making any offering at the altar. For the whole time he had to fast until evening as if in Lent, except on Sundays and feast days, and he was never to travel except on foot. "He ought," adds the Pope, "to do penance for the whole of his life; but we have taken into account his faith, and the protection of the holy apostles which he came hither to seek."<sup>2</sup>

Now, here we find the Sovereign Pontiff, in the fulness of his apostolic authority, dispensing a sinner from some of the penalty which, according to the sacred canons, he ought to have suffered—first, in consideration of the pilgrim's faith, but also in virtue of the apostles' protection which the Pope regards as an "efficacious principle" of satisfaction. What is this if not an indulgence?

About the same time Solomon, Bishop of Constance,

<sup>1</sup> See a letter of Fr. W. H. Bernard Saunders, "An Ancient national Devotion to St Peter," published by the *Catholic Times* of June 23, 1893.

<sup>2</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, Book LI, n. 8.



in a fit of passion and human frailty, had degraded his office by causing three persons who had opposed him to be waylaid and murdered. But he soon repented of his crime, and went to Rome to beg for penance and forgiveness from the Vicar of Christ. Eckhardt records that the Pope received him kindly. He made him wait for some time outside his palace, according to custom, and then yielding to his prayers he granted him an indulgence, which allowed him before long to return to his see.<sup>1</sup>

In 1030 the great Cnut, or Canute, King of Denmark, England, Norway and a part of Sweden, went to Rome "to pray for the remission of his sins, for the salvation of his kingdom, and for the nations living under his sceptre," these being the words of a letter that he sent from Rome to his subjects.<sup>2</sup>

What, then, was the pilgrims' intention in visiting all these holy places? Did they simply want to receive sacramental absolution? It would have been unnecessary for that purpose to undertake long and painful journeys, with all the exposure to hard weather and the inconveniences inseparable from medieval travelling; for sacramental absolution is as valid in one place as it is in another, and whether given by a simple priest, a Bishop, or the Pope himself. Hence, these pilgrims went in search of something that they could not get at home, and that was the remission of whatever temporal penalty they still owed to divine justice after the guilt of their sins had been pardoned. What they wanted was to have the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints applied to them, in return for their devotion, thanks to the sanctity of the place.

<sup>1</sup> Eckhardt, *Comment.* t. i, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> William of Malmesbury, *de Rebus Regum gestis Anglorum*, Lib. II, § 183. Frankfort, 1601. Cf. C.T.S. Conferences, 1891.

11. When penitents were unable to go to Rome, Tours, Canterbury or Compostella, or by any other means to obtain a commutation of penance, they had recourse to the Sovereign Pontiff by letters for obtaining the desired pardon.

The German bishops, for instance, asked Pope John VIII (A.D. 882) whether those men, who had died fighting against the heathens for Christianity and the State, had received the remission of their sins. The Pope replied that in reality all such who had died with sentiments of Christian piety received eternal life; and that he, for his own part, gave them absolution as far as lay in his power.<sup>1</sup>

Here then evidently is an example of the "pardon" which we now call a plenary indulgence. It is certainly an indulgence; for the absolution mentioned by the Pope could not be sacramental absolution which presupposes confession and the presence of the penitent, and therefore it is an absolution granted outside the tribunal, *i.e.*, an indulgence. Further, it is "plenary" because the Pope grants it *as far as he can*. Some writers have seen in this instance a "plenary indulgence applicable to the dead," the soldiers in question having already died when the Pope wrote; but the indulgence might nevertheless be applicable to the living, the Pope granting to all soldiers who should give their lives in battle for faith and country full remission of the temporal punishment due to their sins at the hour of death; which is

<sup>1</sup> "Quantum fas est, absolvimus precibusque illos Domino commendamus."—Johann. VIII, Ep. clxxxvi; *cf.* Amort, *op. cit.* Part I, sect. i, n. 108, p. 84; and Part II, sect. v, arg. ii, p. 294; Baronius, *Ann.* t. x, a. 878, n. 34. Mr. Lea, *op. cit.* p. 332 (continuation of note 4 of preceding page), sees in these words only a "meaningless expression of encouragement" to those who were fighting against the Northmen. Surely the expression is significant enough: the doubt, if there is any, is only about the purport of John VIII's absolution.

what we now call a plenary indulgence *in articulo mortis*.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes letters of this kind were sent to Bishops. About 876 Hildebald, Bishop of Soissons, having fallen seriously ill, sent a written confession to Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, his Metropolitan. Immediately on receiving it Hincmar ordered prayers throughout his diocese; but Hildebald then sent a second confession to Hincmar, by the hands of a priest, earnestly begging for letters of absolution. The Archbishop replied by a letter wherein he discoursed on the excellence of the power granted to priests of remitting sins, and on the consequences of that power. He then gave the sick man a general absolution in the form of a prayer, excusing himself for being unable to go and see him on account of illness. He adds, however, that he visits him in spirit, charges his brethren in the priesthood to do for the sick prelate all that he would have done himself, and sends him some oil blessed by his own hand.

He then continues thus: "I warn thee—and I doubt not that thou hast already done it—that, besides this general confession, thou must further confess, with all necessary detail, to God and to some priest or other, everything that thou knowest thou

<sup>1</sup> This view is contradicted by Dr. N. Paulus, who writes: "Dass unter dieser Absolution des Papstes keine sacramentale Lossprechung von der Sündenschuld zu verstehen sei, liegt auf der Hand. Man darf aber auch nicht an eine Lossprechung von den Sündenstrafen oder an einen eigentlichen Ablass denken; denn damals waren Ablässe für Verstorbene noch etwas Unbekanntes." Die ältesten Kreuzzugablässe, in *Wissenschaftliche Beilage zur Germania*, N. 30. 27 Juli, J. 1911.—First of all, let it be remembered that Indulgences do not belong formally to sacramental absolution. Secondly, Dr. N. Paulus gives no reason for denying herein the reality of an indulgence, except that indulgences for the dead were then unknown, which is begging the question. Dr. N. Paulus has confirmed this view in *Geschichte, etc.*, I Band, ii, p. 50.

hast committed from the beginning of thy life until now. It is enough to have made this detailed confession<sup>1</sup> of all our sins once, provided that we do not fall again. If we do fall again, we must have recourse to penance, and remember that regret for sins committed is of no value if we do not give them up. As to lighter daily faults, we ought to confess them every day to our brethren, that they may be blotted out by prayer and the practice of good works."<sup>1</sup>

Morinus<sup>2</sup> remarks here that this written absolution sent by Hincmar was an indulgence and a blessing, but not sacramental absolution; for the latter necessarily presupposes a detailed confession made to a priest in his presence, whilst the "general confession" of Hildebald contained no explicit accusation of any sin. It was, in fact, analogous to our *Confiteor*, and to the general absolutions given in ancient religious orders on the chief feasts of the year.<sup>3</sup>

12. As one of the practices performed by pilgrims in Rome was that of visiting the *Stations*, in order to gain the indulgences that the Popes had attached to these visits, it will be well to describe here this ancient devotion in some detail.

The word "station," *statio*, appears (as we have had occasion to remark earlier in this book) to have been borrowed from military language.<sup>4</sup> The Romans used it sometimes for the place in which soldiers were quartered, and sometimes for the ground assigned to them, which had to be held at all costs.<sup>5</sup>

As to the station itself, it is an institution whose

<sup>1</sup> Hincmar. op. 40, t. ii, p. 686.

<sup>2</sup> *De Poenit.* Lib. VIII, c. xxv, n. 45.

<sup>3</sup> See *Caeremoniale* Ord. Serv. B.M.V., p. 103, Rome, 1884.

<sup>4</sup> This origin is confirmed by the following words of Tertulian, *De Orat.*: "Statio de militari exemplo nomen accipit, nam et militia Dei sumus."

<sup>5</sup> Thus Virgil writes, *Aeneid*, Book IX: "Servantque vices statione relictæ."

origin may be traced to the Synagogue, the rites and ceremonies of which prefigured the most sublime mysteries of the New Covenant. The Jews believed that all the people ought to be present at the sacrifice offered for them. But, as this was not always possible, they instituted a "station" or special ministry composed of ten persons, whose only occupation was to represent the people at the sacrifices.

The word *statio*, then, was introduced into the Christian liturgy to signify the presence of the faithful at the sacred functions, and hence it was synonymous with such expressions as *synaxis*, *collecta*, *conventus*; and just as in the military "stations" night sentinels were not relieved till morning, so the early Christians remained in prayer till break of day, keeping rigorous fast throughout the night.

Thus, from apostolic times, the Church was in the habit of sanctifying the night by watching and praying; and, in the course of time, these nocturnal "watches" took the name of *Vigils*. Tertullian calls them *nocturnal convocations*, and the pagans made them the occasion of vile calumnies against the Christians. In reality, the true object of the faithful in keeping such vigils was to expiate the horrible pagan debauches and indecent orgies held during the night. At the same time, the custom was an observance of the psalmist's exhortation: "In the nights lift up your hands to the holy places, and bless ye the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

During persecutions, these assemblies were held in the crypts or churches hollowed out of the immense burying-places underground, commonly called *catacombs*, which stretched for several miles around the city of Rome. The faithful assisted in silence at the holy Sacrifice offered upon the tombs of the first Christian heroes. In times of peace they assembled in one of the

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxxxiii 2



basilicas erected on the ground above the cemeteries, usually in the one consecrated to the Martyr whose feast was to be kept on the following day. After the chanting of psalms and hymns there was a spiritual conference, directed and presided over by the Bishop; and the meeting finished with the celebration of Mass, at which the faithful communicated.

Very often these vigils went on for a great part of the next day.<sup>1</sup> St Gregory Nazianzen describes in moving words the wonderful faith of these Christians, whose fervour induced them to spend their lives in these "stations" by night and by day, occupying long hours in psalm-singing, taking only a short rest on the bare ground, and consuming themselves, so to speak, by the intensity of their ardour.

"Clothed in a hair-shirt and covered with ashes, this man excites pity by his tears. His couch is the naked earth, and for whole months he keeps vigils that are not interrupted even by the daytime. . . . He himself hastens the separation of body and soul."<sup>2</sup>

13. It would be difficult to determine at what precise date the Christian custom of "stations" began. Like most ecclesiastical institutions it grew imperceptibly, even as a small stream gradually becomes a mighty river. Unquestionably, however, it belongs to the earliest ages. Tertullian puts forward, as one reason against marriages between Christians and heathens, the conduct of a pagan husband who, without any consideration for his wife's faith, may ask her to accompany him to the baths on the day of a station as well as on any other day.<sup>3</sup> St Leo the Great (†461), in his

<sup>1</sup> They were then called *νυχθήμεραι*, which means *nocturnal-diurnal*.

<sup>2</sup> *Carmen* I, *περὶ ἀρετῆς*, vers. 663, foll. Paris, 1842, t. ii, p. 448.

<sup>3</sup> "Si statio facienda est, maritus de die condicat ad balnea." *Ad Uxor.* Book II, iv.

sermons, makes many allusions to the practice. But it was St Gregory the Great (†604) who chiefly developed and regularly organised the stations, as the deacon John records in his life of that Pontiff.<sup>1</sup> St Gregory II (†731) appointed stations on certain days of Lent left vacant by St Gregory the Great.<sup>2</sup>

But the spirit of evil will creep into the very best things, and disorders arose in connexion with these nocturnal assemblies, serious enough for the authorities to decide on their suppression.<sup>3</sup> However, the measure was not fully carried out till about the eighth or ninth century. But the holy practice of praying through the night was always kept up in full vigour in the monastic orders. The night office, *i.e.*, Matins and Lauds, divided the night into four parts, much after the fashion of the military *vigiliae* to which the evangelist St Matthew refers in writing of our Lord's apparition on the water.<sup>4</sup> For a long time the laity, both men and women, made it a point of conscience to attend the divine Psalmody. It is even told of Charlemagne that he took an active part in the office and often presided over it, in order to see that it was accurately carried out.

The place where the next station was to be held was given out to the people at the public Mass preceding the date, either by the archdeacon from the altar,<sup>5</sup> or by the notary of the Roman Church.<sup>6</sup>

At an early hour the faithful assembled in the church which had been appointed beforehand.

<sup>1</sup> Book III, c. xviii. "Stationes constituit ordinavitque per basilicas vel beatorum martyrum coemeteria."

<sup>2</sup> Mabillon, *Mus. Ital.* t. ii, comment. v, p. xxxiii, Paris, 1724.

<sup>3</sup> See Sermon. xxv, amongst those falsely attributed to St Augustine.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xiv 25. See St Jerome's commentary on that passage.

<sup>5</sup> Ordo Rom. I, 20, ap. Mabillon, *Mus. Ital.* t. ii, p. 14. Cf. A. Fortescue, *The Mass*. London, 1912, p. 174.

<sup>6</sup> Mabillon, *op. cit.* t. ii, comment. v, p. xxxiii.

There a special prayer was said over them, called for that reason *collecta*, "the prayer over the assembled people," hence the church in which this first gathering took place was called the "Church of the Collecta." After the prayer they all left in good order to go to the church of the station.

The Pope also went, sometimes borne on the *sedia gestatoria*, sometimes on horseback, and preceded by a large cross, called the "stational cross." On such occasions he distributed gifts, either to the servants who attended him or to the people who cheered him as he passed. On the way, either personally or through his chaplain, he delivered judgement, pronounced sentences or decided lawsuits.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as the Pope arrived at the station church they sang High Mass, in the course of which the homily was pronounced.<sup>2</sup> In course of time the station church received the strange name of "Galilee," perhaps in allusion to our Lord's promise that his disciples should see him again in Galilee.<sup>3</sup>

Before the Communion the district subdeacon announced from the altar the station for the next day: "Crastina die veniente, statio erit in Ecclesia sancti (or sanctae) N. . . ."; and the cantors answered: "Deo gratias."

The ceremony finished, the acolyte carried to the Pope, in his palace, a flock of tow soaked in the oil of the lamp. This tow was put aside and kept by the "cubicularius" (chamberlain), and all the pieces thus

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *op. cit.* p. xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. xvi, Index sollemnium collectarum ac Stationum S.R.E., which Mabillon published from two MSS. in the Vatican Library, Paris, 1724.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxviii 7, 10. But it is difficult to give any satisfactory explanation of this name. Later on the name "Galilee" was given to a large and ornate porch or chapel placed on the west side of the great abbey-churches. Examples of such may be seen in Durham and Ely Cathedrals.

preserved were afterwards used to make a cushion which was placed under the Pope's head after his death.

14. We have just spoken of processions, and some words about them will be of interest. Processions had been in use amongst the pagans long before the Catholic Church introduced them into her liturgy. In fact, pagans were wont to make invocations to the gods on their way to the altars. Plato describes them in his legislation and directs that processions and stately functions should be held in honour of the gods.<sup>1</sup> Such processions, or supplications, were accompanied by musical instruments, religious dances, the singing of hymns and the light of torches. Athenagoras appropriately names them "songs of supplication."<sup>2</sup>

The Christians, too, sang in their processions, but what they sang most frequently was litanies.<sup>3</sup> These litanies consisted of invocations to saints and martyrs, particularly to those who were venerated at the place where the feast was being held. They always began with the Greek invocation, *Kyrie Eleison*, "Lord, have mercy," etc., and in the very earliest forms of such prayers almost the whole litany consisted of repetitions of these words.

An ancient Roman ritual, preserved in a MS. of Monte Cassino, orders the *Kyrie Eleison* to be recited a hundred times during the procession which took place on the vigil of our Lady's Assumption. This procession started from "Sta Maria Minore"<sup>4</sup> and went to "Sta Maria Maggiore."<sup>5</sup>

The words *Kyrie Eleison* were used by the Jews

<sup>1</sup> προσόδους καὶ πομπὰς θεοῖς ποιεῖσθαι.

<sup>2</sup> προσοδιαμέλη.

<sup>3</sup> So named from the Greek λιτανεύω, "to pray with fervour." See Card. Bona, *Div. Psalmodia*, c. xxv, met. 31, n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Now Sta Francesca ad Forum Romanum.

<sup>5</sup> Mabillon, *op. cit.* comment. v, p. 34, Paris, 1724.

as well as by the Christians, and the pagans also were well acquainted with them. St Augustine remarks that they were "familiar to the barbarians no less than to the Latins."<sup>1</sup>

These processions, sometimes themselves called "litanies" from the form of supplication accompanying them,<sup>2</sup> were named later on "rogations," under which name they are still practised in the Catholic Church on St Mark's day (April 25) and on the three days before Ascension Day.<sup>3</sup> The Roman Missal still calls the first of these "Litaniae majores" and the second "Litaniae minores." The institution of the former is attributed to St Gregory, and that of the latter by most authors to St Mamertus, the illustrious Bishop of Vienne, in France. Some writers, however, assign a yet earlier date to these processions, and explain the distinction between "major" and "minor" litanies as relating to the larger or smaller number of faithful who took part in them; whilst others have no hesitation in connecting the distinction with heathen ceremonies and customs.<sup>4</sup> It is certain, however, that litanies with the invocation of Saints were in use in the East at the time of St Basil (†379), and even of St Gregory Thaumaturgus (†about 270).<sup>5</sup>

The reason for this was that the ancient Romans, on the very same day on which we have our "Litaniae

<sup>1</sup> Ep. clxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> Thus Dante calls processions *letane*, an old word for *litanie*. *Inf.*, canto xx, v. 9.

<sup>3</sup> "Litania interpretatur latine supplicatio, sive rogatio. Supplicatio dicitur, quia tunc Deo supplicamus, ut a morte subitanea, et ab omni adversitate nos defendat. Rogatio appellatur quia tunc sanctos rogamus, ut pro nobis ad Dominum intercedant." John Belet (†1190), *Rationale divinarum officiorum*, c. cxxii, Migne 202, col. 428.

<sup>4</sup> See the Isagoge Liturgica inserted in t. ix of the edition of the works of St Gregory the Great, Venice, 1772.

<sup>5</sup> See Socrates, *Hist.*, Book vi 8; Sozomenus, *Hist.*, Book viii 7; Letter LXIII of St Basil.



majores," celebrated the feast of the Robigalia,<sup>1</sup> whose object was to call down the protection of heaven on the fruits of the earth, threatened at that season by the late frosts of the April moon. This festival consisted chiefly of a procession which left Rome by the Via Flaminia, passed the Ponte Molle and ended at the temple of the goddess Robiga, at the fifth mile on the Via Claudia.

When the "Rogation" superseded the pagan feast of the Robigalia, it was customary to announce it in the Church of St George on the day of his feast (April 23); and on April 25 (St Mark's day) they started from the Church of St Lawrence in Lucina, went by the Flaminian Way and the Ponte Molle and came back towards St Peter's by Nero's Fields. On the way they stopped at St Valentinian's, on the Pons Milvius, and also at a cross erected on the other side of the bridge. The final stopping-place was in the *atrium* of St Peter's, and they concluded the whole by having the sacred mysteries celebrated in that basilica.<sup>2</sup>

It was in the course of one of these processions that the horrible attempt on the life of St Leo III was made by two of his predecessors' nephews, Paschal Primmerius and Campolus Sacellarius, ambitious men who had usurped their offices under their uncle's pontificate.

Pope Leo had left the Lateran patriarchium on horseback to join the procession. Suddenly he found himself confronted by Pascal, who had not put on the *planeta*, or clerical habit, which both clerics and cantors at that time used to wear in the processions. His intention was to attempt the Pontiff's life. He began by excusing himself for his irregular costume, alleging ill-health.

<sup>1</sup> See Ovid, *Fast.* iv, 901.

<sup>2</sup> Duchesne, *Lib. Pontif.*, Leo III, n. 17. St Leo III reigned twenty years, from 795 to 816.

The Pope forgave him, and requested that he would follow him. Campolus, Pascal's accomplice, then joined the company, and they both walked by the Pontiff's side, conversing with him, until they came near the monastery of SS. Sylvester and Stephen, when some armed men suddenly rushed out, attacked the Pope, threw him to the ground, and struck him cruelly. The people around, being unarmed, took flight. Pascal and Campolus joined the assailants, tore the sacred vestments and ornaments off St Leo, and tried to put out his eyes and cut off his tongue, after which they dragged him into the monastery church with the intention of finishing their sacrilegious work.

However, the Pope, though badly wounded, recovered, and did not lose the use of eyes or tongue, which some writers look upon as a miraculous escape. But the more likely opinion held by others is that the conspirators, not daring to carry their attempt on the Vicar of Christ to the last extremity, contented themselves with ill-treating him.<sup>1</sup>

15. To return to the stations: the pilgrims who came to Rome often intended to take part in them, and to perform all the usual practices of these assemblies with the rest of the faithful. Thus, to give only one example, when Charlemagne came to Rome for the first time, in 774, he made it a duty to assist at the solemn Masses celebrated by the Pope on Easter Sunday at Sta Maria Maggiore, on Easter Monday at St Peter's and on Easter Tuesday at St Paul's outside the Walls—the very churches at which the stations are still appointed for these three days at the present time.

<sup>1</sup> A. Muratori, *Annali d'Italia*, a. 799. On the Roman stations, see Ugonio, *Delle Stazioni di Roma*, 1588, and Piazza, *Eortologio*, ovvero le sacre Stazioni Romane, Rome, 1858.

In course of time, the Sovereign Pontiffs had it at heart to promote the exercise of the Roman Stations by enriching them with numerous Indulgences. It is difficult, not to say impossible, to give the precise date when such papal concessions began. They certainly may be traced back as far as the eleventh century, but it must be observed that this practice, like other similar institutions, did not suddenly come into existence, but was gradually prepared in previous times.<sup>1</sup> The Church had formerly strictly forbidden the publishing of any catalogue whatsoever of the "stational" indulgences, because it was not possible to verify the grants by the originals.<sup>2</sup> Pius VI was the first to approve, by a decree of July 9, 1777,<sup>3</sup> an official enumeration of them, drawn up by the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, after exhaustive study and long deliberation.<sup>4</sup>

16. On leaving Rome the pilgrims often carried away with them, as they do still, a small object of devotion called an *Agnus Dei* for a keepsake of their visit. This is a bit of wax moulded in the form of a

<sup>1</sup> "Gleich verschiedenen anderen kirchlichen Institutionen ist der Ablass nicht plötzlich und unvorbereitet in die Welt getreten; et hat sich vielmehr allmählich aus der kirchlichen Busspraxis entwickelt." N. Paulus, "Die Anfänge des Ablasses." *Geschichte. etc.*, I, Band I, p. 1. William of Auxerre, Book IV, Summ. tract. VI, c. ix, followed by St Thomas in IV Sent. dist. XX, q. 1., art. 3, declares, we know not on what grounds, that St Gregory the Great was the author of these indulgences. Boniface VIII says the same thing, in the Bull *Etsi de cunctis*, quoted by Panvinus, de Ritu sepel. mortuos, in Amort, *op. cit.* Part II, sect. iv, p. 227. These are his words: "Sane perlustramus, qualiter B. Gregorius et alii praedecessores nostri Urbis ecclesiis diversorum tenorum stationarias indulgentias concesserunt." Regarding the epoch when indulgences were granted by the Popes in connexion with the Roman stations, see N. Paulus, "Die Ablässe der römischen Kirchen," vor Innocenz III, in *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> S. C. Indulg., Decr. Auth. n. 12.

<sup>3</sup> S. C. Indulg., Rescript. Auth. I, n. 313.

<sup>4</sup> See Beringer, *Les Indulgences*, t. i, p. 423.

medal with, on the one side, the impress of a lamb bearing the Cross as a standard.<sup>1</sup>

In many churches outside Rome it was the custom to distribute to the faithful, on the octave day of Easter, what was left over from the Easter candle of the previous year. The people had this wax burnt in their houses and fields, piously believing that this would keep off attacks of the evil spirits and also hurricanes and thunder. In Rome they mixed the remains of the Paschal candle with oil and other wax. This compound, blessed on Holy Saturday by the archdeacon, was used to make the *Agnus Dei* that were given to the neophytes on the day on which they wore their white garments for the last time, *i.e.*, the Sunday after Easter.<sup>2</sup> Some of these *Agnus Dei* were also distributed to the people, who held them in great veneration, wrapping them in precious fabrics or even keeping them in small gold or silver reliquaries. There is still to be seen, in the treasure chamber at Aix-la-Chapelle, an *Agnus Dei* that belonged to Charlemagne.<sup>3</sup>

Although there have never been—which is a fact worthy of note—indulgences attached to *Agnus Dei*, yet the Church counts them among her “sacramentals,” whose virtue we know to consist in stimulating the piety of the faithful, and in thus preparing them to receive a greater abundance of divine grace. This virgin-wax, free from all blemish and marked with the figure of the spotless Lamb slain for our sins, is well

<sup>1</sup> See the Synod. Trull., can. 82. Interesting details on the *Agnus Dei* will be found in A. Battandier, *Annuaire Pont. Cath.*, 1901, pp. 351-361.

<sup>2</sup> Hence the name given to that Sunday: *Dominica in albis*.

<sup>3</sup> Martigny, *Dict. des Antiquités Chrét.*, under the word “*Agnus Dei*.” See also in the *Etudes archéologiques sur l'Agneau et le bon Pasteur*, the article “*Les Agnus Dei*,” p. 68, Mâcon, 1860; *Dict. Theol.* (Mangenot) I, 605. Thurston, *Holy Year*, pp. 247-256. H. Grisar, S.J., *Civiltà Cattolica*, June 1, 1907.

calculated to stimulate faith and so to draw down upon us many blessings from God. Hence tradition attributes to the *Agnus Dei*, carried about or kept at home in a spirit of faith, many beneficial effects. These are described in some Latin verses written by Pope Urban V (A.D. 1362–1370) when he sent an *Agnus Dei* to the Emperor John Palæologus. The following is a rough translation of these verses:

Balm and virgin wax, with holy oils,  
 Make up the Lamb that I give thee for a great gift.  
 Cherish it as a new-born [lamb] sanctified by mystic rites.  
 It drives away lightning from above, and all evil;  
 It helps the pregnant, and gives them safe child-birth.  
 Carried by the pure, it saves from floods of waves.  
 Like the Blood of Christ it weakens and crushes sin;  
 It ensures many favours to the worthy, it destroys fire,  
 Protects from sudden death and Satan's destruction;  
 If any one adores it, it will keep him triumphant over the enemy.  
*Agnus Dei, miserere mei !*<sup>1</sup>

This "pious practice" is a very early one in the Church. It is mentioned in fact in the first *Ordo Romanus*, published by Mabillon,<sup>2</sup> which is, according to him, the most ancient book of Roman rites that we possess, having Pope Gelasius I (A.D. 492–496) for its author. At any rate the practice was in use under St Gregory the Great; for among the objects sent by him to Theodolinda, Queen of the Lombards, is an *Agnus Dei*.<sup>3</sup> Walafrid Strabo says that St Gregory himself began the custom; whilst Alcuin,<sup>4</sup> Amalarius<sup>5</sup> and Durandus<sup>6</sup> content themselves with saying that it is of great antiquity.

<sup>1</sup> Ap. Du Cange, under the word "*Agnus Dei*."

<sup>2</sup> *Mus. Ital.*, II, comment. t. ii, p. viii, Paris, 1724.

<sup>3</sup> Frizi, *Memorie di Monza*, t. i, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> *De Div. Offic.* c. xix.

<sup>5</sup> B. I, c. xvi.

<sup>6</sup> *Rationale Div. Offic.* B. VI, c. lxxix.—Martène, *de antiq. Eccles. Disciplina in div. cel. Off.* c. 24, p. 410, § II; Bened. XIV, *De Canon. SS.*, B. IV, p. 2, cap. 20, n. 12; p. 1, cap. 5, nn. 10, 11, 12, and Sirmond may also be consulted on this subject.



According to the present custom the Pope, in pontifical vestments, blesses the *Agnus Dei* on Holy Saturday in the first year of his pontificate, and after that every seven years.<sup>1</sup> The subdeacon presents the waxen medallions to the Pope when the " *Agnus Dei* " of the Mass has been said, thus addressing him: " Behold the new lambs which announce to you Alleluia ! Behold they come to the fountains, alleluia ! " And the Pope, plunging them into holy water, blesses them.

History records that the devotion of the faithful for these objects has always been great. The penal laws of Queen Elizabeth punished with death any one found wearing an *Agnus Dei* in England. A council at Lima in 1582 proves Spanish attachment to the devotion.<sup>2</sup>

17. Some account must now be given of the first origin of " Gregorian altars " and " Gregorian Masses," of which we have already discussed the objective value.<sup>3</sup>

In the second half of the sixth century there lived in Rome a monk named Gregory. He was a descendant of the illustrious family of the *Anicii* and related by ties of kindred to the world-renowned family of the *Symmachi*, from whose members, St Jerome says, the consuls were often chosen.

On the death of his father, named Gordian, who had himself been famous as a senator, Gregory sold his possessions. With their price he first built six monasteries in Sicily; then he founded one on Mount Coelius, in his own ancestral home, on a spot then called *ad clivum Scauri*. Here this saintly man, destined by birth and education to the very highest

<sup>1</sup> Ordo Rom. XV, n. 73, auctore P. Amelio, published by Mabillon, *Mus. Ital.*, t. ii, p. 480, ed. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Conc. Hisp. t. iv, Collect., p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> Part I, c. iii, n. 9. *Nouvelle Revue Théol.* vol. xlv, p. 352.

positions in the state, bade farewell to the world, retiring into this last monastery to profess the religious life under two great spiritual masters, Hilarion and Maximian.

Gregory came to practise the most sublime virtues in his seclusion, but, above all, he was noted for his great love of Christ's poor. He who was one day to be the champion of the papacy and to bring whole nations into the fold of Christ, forestalled his great work by practising heroic charity in the cloister. His charity embraced the dead as well as the living; and it is to him that we trace the establishment of that celebrated suffrage for the departed, now so widespread in the Church, called after him the *Gregorian Masses*.

The origin of this institution, as told by the Pontiff himself in his *Dialogues*, is as follows:<sup>1</sup>

One of the monks, called Justus, skilled in medicine and often attending Gregory in his frequent illnesses, fell ill himself and was at the point of death. He was being nursed by his own brother, Copiosus, also a physician. Justus, feeling that he was about to die, confided to his brother that he had hidden in some secret place three gold pieces. The monks hearing this searched everywhere for the pieces, and found them among the drugs used by Justus for his medicines. The rule, of course, forbade private possessions and ordained that all moneys received should be put into the common stock. When the news of this fault reached St Gregory, he was greatly grieved and began to think by what means he could both correct the sick man and give a wholesome lesson to the brethren. He sent for one Pretiosus, provost of the monastery, and said to him: "Go and see that no brother visits the dying man and gives him consolation;

<sup>1</sup> Lib. IV, c. lv.

so that, finding himself dying alone and hearing the reason from you, he shall acknowledge his fault, lament it bitterly, and purify himself by his tears. When he is dead, do not let his body be laid by those of his brethren; but dig a grave for him in a thicket, and throw in after him the three pieces of gold that he hid, and let all those present say: 'May thy money perish with thee!' "<sup>1</sup>

These orders were strictly carried out. The guilty monk, learning why his brethren had deserted him, lamented his fault, and died full of contrition. The lesson bore fruit, for the brethren all made haste to hand over even the smallest things for common use. A month after Justus's death St Gregory felt greatly moved by pity for the dead man, sadly reflecting on his possible sufferings, and considered how he might best come to his help. He sent again for Pretiosus, and said sorrowfully: "For a long time now our brother has been suffering the torments of fire; it will be well to do all we can, in charity, to relieve him. Go thou and for thirty days from this time offer the holy Sacrifice for him; see that no day passes in which the Victim of salvation is not offered up on his behalf."

This was done. St Gregory, busy about many things, forgot to count the days. But one night Justus, who clearly had only been condemned to purgatorial pains, having died repentant, appeared to his brother Copiosus. The latter asked him how he fared, and he replied: "I have fared badly until today, but now I am well, because today I have been received in communion (*i.e.*, to the society of the blessed)." Copiosus reported this to the monks, who, on computation, found that it was exactly the thirtieth day on which Mass had been said for the departed soul; whence they concluded that he had been delivered

<sup>1</sup> Act. VIII, 20.

from his pains precisely by virtue of those thirty Masses.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the incident which gave rise to the traditional practice, recognised by the Church, of saying thirty consecutive Masses for the dead. It was, especially in Germany, a very popular custom, as Papebrock testifies. It was also found in several religious orders, particularly in the monastery of Avellana, according to St Peter Damian, and in the celebrated Abbey of Cluny. Its popularity is also attested by Amalarius and by Peter of Troyes, on the evidence of Cardinal Orsini (afterwards Pope Benedict XIII) in his discourse of "The Thirty Masses founded by St Gregory." This institution led to an extension by the Popes of "the privilege of the Coelian altar" to other altars in various parts of the world. They are called "Gregorian altars *ad instar*," because they share the privileges of St Gregory's altar in Rome.

Later on, the Popes granted the favour of the "privileged" altar, which differs very little from the Gregorian, as already stated. Historians are not quite agreed as to when this grant was first made. Biel attributes a concession of the kind, made to the Church of St Praxedes in Rome, to Paschal I (A.D. 824). But it must be owned that official documents do not justify the assumption of a very early date for the institution; and the first officially authorised grant we have is that made by Julius III, dated March 1, 1552.

Now why, may it be asked, should Gregorian Masses number exactly thirty? Has this number any particular virtue?

<sup>1</sup> The fact that the monk Justus clearly died repentant and was therefore suffering in Purgatory only, does not hinder Mr. Lea (*op. cit.*, p. 330) from quoting this incident in proof of his opinion that the Church formerly believed in the deliverance of souls from Hell. He unhesitatingly declares that Justus had died in mortal sin, and that he had been condemned to the pains of Hell, from which St Gregory's Masses delivered him.

It is difficult to say. For if experience has proved the number effectual, it has given no reason for that efficacy. However, one may try and find some appropriateness in its adoption, and this is so much the more praiseworthy, as, according to St Augustine, both scriptural and ecclesiastical numbers are sacred and mysterious.<sup>1</sup>

First this number was consecrated in the person of Adam, who, according to common opinion, was created in the prime of life, which is when a man is about thirty years old. It was also sanctified in the person of the second Adam, Christ our Lord, who received baptism at the age of about thirty in the waters of the Jordan. Again, this number reminds us of our hopes beyond the grave, because the resurrection that we are promised is to restore us to life in the full vigour of Christ's three-and-thirty years.<sup>2</sup> It is, therefore, quite appropriate that one should offer suffrages of thirty days' length to implore deliverance from Purgatory—which deliverance is a prelude to resurrection—for the children of Adam redeemed by the blood of Christ.

There are yet other mystic "thirties," which justify the faithful in having Masses offered up to the throne of mercy for that number of days. It is said, for instance, that at the death of both Moses and Aaron the Israelites ceased not to weep for thirty days. Again, according to Durandus, the number thirty signifies the remission of sins against the Decalogue, which we implore of the Holy Trinity: "Three times

<sup>1</sup> "Numeros in Scripturis esse sacratissimos et mysteriorum plenissimos in quibusdam quos inde nosse potuimus, dignissime credimus."—S. August. *Quaest. in Gen.* c. cliii; *Opp.* t. iii, p. 657. On the Numerals of the Apocalypse the reader will find useful information in R. F. Weidner, *Annotations on the Revelation of St John*, pp. 36 foll., Chicago, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv 13. See St Thomas, *Suppl.* q. lxxxii, art. 1 ad 2.



ten make thirty; by three we mean the Trinity; by ten, the Decalogue." Hence, we may ask for the perfect purification of the suffering souls and their entrance into glory in honour of the most Blessed Trinity, whose work it is to deliver souls from Purgatory.

18. Another form of institution which must be noticed here is that of confraternities whose object was to insure prayers for the departed members. One of the most ancient confraternities of this kind was, in the opinion of Baronius and of Mabillon, that which existed formerly in the Church of SS Cosmas and Damian in Rome, where it is commemorated by an inscription on a large marble slab, dated A.D. 984. The clergy of this church, making a solemn promise on the holy altars, obliged themselves, under most serious penalties, to sing forty Masses for the repose of each member's soul, unless prevented by illness. Similar confraternities were established in divers places. In Rome itself the clergy of SS John and Paul and of St Adrian ad Forum Romanum very soon followed the example of the priests of SS Cosmas and Damian.

For the benefit of readers who may be interested we here give the text of the above-named inscription at the latter church, keeping its original style and orthography as it is published by Cardinal Mai:<sup>1</sup>

CONSTAT NIMIRVM, DILETISSIMI FR̄S, DE PROMISSIO  
QVAE EX CORDE FECIMVS CORAM DO ET SCIS EIVS VT  
VNVSQSQ. NOSTRV̄M FR̄S SACERDOTES ET EPOS ET POSTERIS  
NRIS SACERDOTES IN PERPETVV̄ QVALISCVMQ. EX HAC  
LVCE MIGRAVERIT XL MISSAS PRO EIVS ANIMA PER VNVM-  
QVEMQ. SACERDOTVM̄ QVI SVPERSTITES ST CANERE PRO-  
MITTIMVS. SI TAM INFIRMITAS FVERIT OCCVPATVS  
NON REPVTET EI IN PECCATV, ET SI RECEPTVS FVERIT  
PRISTIN. SANITATE, HAEC OMNIA QVOD SVPRADICTVM

<sup>1</sup> Script. Vet. t. v., p. 16; also see pp. 17, 18.

EST ADIMPLEAT. QVI VERO CVSTVS ET OBSERVATOR  
FVERIT, HABEAT BENEDICTIONEM DEI PATRIS OMNI-  
POTENTIS ET FILI ET SPS. SCI. ET CELESTEM REGNVN  
POSSEDEAT CVM OMIBVS SCIS. ET QVI HOC NON OBSER-  
VAVERIT, SIT ANATHEMATIS VINCVLO INNODATVS, ET A  
REGNO DEI SEPARATVS. ISTA VERA PROMISSIO FACTA  
FVIT ANTE SACRVN SCM DOMINICVM ALTARE HVIVS  
AVLAE. TEMP. DOM. IOHI. XIII PP. MENSE FEB. DIE. XXII.

INDIC. XII. ANNO DOMC. INCARNATIONIS

DCCCCLXXXIII.

BENED. SACR. EXARAV. ORT. PRO ME PECCAT.

19. Yet one more practice connected with the history of indulgences in the middle ages remains to be mentioned, *i.e.*, the frequent foundation of churches, monasteries, hospices for pilgrims, refuges for the poor and hospitals for the sick.<sup>1</sup> The world was filled then with such institutions, many of which still remain. Even in countries which have thrown off the authority of the Catholic Church, the efforts made to substitute modern philanthropic societies, based on purely humanitarian principles for supernatural charity, have not succeeded in wholly destroying the old foundations, as may be seen particularly in England.

Rome, of all the cities of the world, was the chief centre of these various institutions, which were all animated by the same spirit, enlightened by the same faith, bound to God by the same ties of love.

Every form of infirmity and misery seemed to have found a corresponding form of charity in the Eternal City. There were hospitals for every disease, where Christians voluntarily gave their services; there were foundations for providing poor girls with dowries

<sup>1</sup> Cf. N. Paulus: *Indulgences as a Social Factor in the Middle Ages*, trans. E. Ross, New York, 1921; *Dict. Apol.* II. 732.

and old men and women with pensions; asylums for orphans; houses for the blind; free schools for teaching different trades; colleges for educating clerics of all nations; refuges both for girls exposed to danger and women unhappily married; establishments for the reformation of persons of bad character; guest-houses where pilgrims from every part of the world were received<sup>1</sup>—in short, institutions for all sorts and conditions of men.

No taxes were levied on the poor to support these charities, for voluntary benefactors were never wanting. On the other hand beggars were not ashamed to knock at doors on which were inscribed the Apostle's words, "The charity of Christ presseth us."<sup>2</sup> They could hold out their hand for an alms without blushing, because they were looked upon as the doorkeepers of the heavenly Jerusalem, who could admit their benefactors "into the everlasting dwellings" in return for their generosity.<sup>3</sup>

Now the motive of Christians in making these charitable foundations was almost always the desire to provide for the state of their own souls in the next world and thus to redeem their past faults. In nearly all the deeds of foundation we find the following words, *in remedium animae meae*, or the like. To give only one example: Belisarius, Justinian's great general and the glory of his reign, built in Rome a "Xenodochium," or hospital, on the old Flaminian Way, with an oratory dedicated to the Mother of God under the title of "Sta Maria in Trivio," which still exists. An author of the eleventh or twelfth century

<sup>1</sup> From the middle of the seventh century the ancient Schola Anglorum, under the patronage of the Saxon Kings, received English pilgrims. Later an English hospice was founded on the spot where the Venerable English College now stands. Cardinal Gasquet, *The Hist. of the Ven. Eng. Coll.*, London, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v 14.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xvi 9.

has recorded in the epigraphic style of that decadent period the motives of the Patrician in building this church. The chief one was to obtain the pardon of his sins, whence all who come into the temple are earnestly intreated to implore the divine mercy for the founder. Here is the inscription:

HANC VIR PATRICIVS VILISARIUS VRBIS AMICVS  
OB CVLPÆ VENIAM CONDIDIT ECCLESIAM.  
HANC HIC CIRCO PEDEM SACRAM QVI PONIS IN AEDEM  
VT MISERETVR EVM SAEPE PRECARE DEVM.  
IANVA HAEC EST TEMPLI DOMINO DEFENSA POTENTI.<sup>1</sup>

We may here mention the foundation made by John XII at Subiaco on May 10, 958. As he was passing through that place he confirmed, at the request of Abbot Leo, the monasteries of Saint Benedict and of Saint Scholastica in their possessions, on condition that both priests and monks should chant daily one hundred *Kyrie eleison* and as many *Christe eleison* for the benefit of his soul, as well as of the souls of the Pontiffs who should die after him.<sup>2</sup> He further directed the priests to offer up special prayers in the Mass three times a week for the same intention, from which we may gather that this Pope had not all the vices which his German biographers have attributed to him.

We must also not omit to mention some special forms of donation in which the idea of remissions or indulgences comes out with peculiar distinctness.

<sup>1</sup> See Armellini, *Le Chiese di Roma*, Rome, 1891, p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> "Sacerdotes sacras oblationes in missarum solemnibus tribus vicibus per singulas hebdomadas pro absolutione nostrae animae nostrorumque successorum Pontificum omnipotenti Deo offerant."—Philippus Jaffé, 464-475, ed. Lipsiae, 1881, tomus I. Muratori, Ant. It. V, 461, VI, 203, Migne 133, p. 1020 (Cum pie desiderium.)

Facts to which those forms refer belong to an epoch rather later than the one with which we are here dealing. But the special affinity they present with our subject may be a sufficient apology for the following anachronism.

We may first mention the gift made by Countess Mathilda of her possessions to the Roman Church. That "valiant woman" (for she deserves the title if ever any woman did),<sup>1</sup> not satisfied with having boldly supported the interests of Gregory VII against the pretensions of the Emperor Henry IV, chose also to endow the Church of Rome with all her goods whilst she was staying at Reggio d'Emilia. She confirmed the gift afresh on November 17, 1112, by a document addressed to Pascal II, in which she inserted these words: *Pro mercede et remedio animae meae et parentum meorum*, "For the redemption and health of my soul, and those of my parents."<sup>2</sup>

The second is of later date, being of 1289. It is embodied in the following inscription engraved on a bell which is actually in the Vatican gardens, but which once belonged to the bell-tower of Santa Maria Maggiore:

AD HONOREM DEI ET BEATAE MARIAE VIR  
GINIS ISTA CAMPANA FACTA FVIT PER  
ALFANVM POSTMODVM IN ANNO DOMINI  
MCCLXXXIX RENOVATA EST PER  
DOMINVM PANDVLFVM DE SABELLO  
PRO REDEMPTIONE ANIME SVE GUIDOC  
TVS PISANVS ET ANDREA EIVS FILIVS  
ME FECERVNT.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mathilde, Countess of Tuscany, was born A.D. 1046, and died A.D. 1115.

<sup>2</sup> Muratori, *Rer. Ital.* t. v, p. 384, Milan, 1724.

<sup>3</sup> Armellini, *Le Chiese di Roma*, p. 231.



Lastly we may mention a deed of donation made in 1305, and contained in the following inscription which is actually to be found near the altar of the Baptistery of Pisa:

A : D : M : CCC : V : INDIC. SECVNDA  
 X. KAL. SEPT. BONAE MEMORIAE DNVS  
 CALCINVS DE SALA CANCVS PISANVS  
 OBIIT QUI PRO REMEDIO ANIMAE SVAE  
 IMPIVSQVE (*ipsiusque*) PARENTVM ET AD REVERENTIA  
 OIPOTENTIS DEI ET B. M. GENITRICIS DEI  
 ET B. IO BATTAE HONORABILIT (*sic*)  
 HOC ALTARE.

These foundations, then, were made by the faithful and by penitents in the firm trust that they would be of use in delivering their souls, burdened with faults—*not*, indeed, by blotting out the *guilt*, which is the work of contrition and absolution; nor by rooting out bad habits resulting from sin, which can only be done by performing contrary acts—but by turning aside the punishment incurred by the sinful soul, according to the just decrees of God. St Peter Damian confirms this interpretation of the custom in explicit terms: "When we receive from penitents," he says, "a piece of ground, we remit to them a portion of penance corresponding to their gift."<sup>1</sup>

Such was the common practice at that period, as the above words of a Doctor clearly show. The Church was aware of it, and did not oppose it. Indeed, unless we would accuse her of wilfully deceiving her children, we must believe that she ratified the

<sup>1</sup> "Non ignorans quia, cum a poenitentibus terras accipimus, juxta mensuram muneris eis de quantitate penitentiae relaxamus, sicut scriptum est: Divitiae hominis redemptio ejus (Prov. xiii 8)." S. Petri Damiani *Epp.* Lib. IV. ep. 12, ad V. Ep. circa med.

condonations thus obtained; and as "what she looses on earth is loosed also in heaven," the remissions granted by her must have been valid before God. We shall now see how new circumstances, arising in the Christian community after the first millennium of its existence, gave her the occasion for exercising her power of remitting the temporal penalty due to sins under a new form and in a greater measure than before.

## CHAPTER IV

### DEVELOPMENT

#### *From the Tenth to the Fifteenth Century*

“ I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.”—*Luke xxii 32.*

Idea of development in the Church—Indulgences appointed for the celebration of feasts and the consecration of churches—False indulgences—Examples of true indulgences—Indulgences granted for the canonisation of saints—The Bishops grant them also—Indulgences in articulo mortis—Recourse to the Pope—Indulgences for the recitation of special prayers—For pilgrimages—The Portiuncula—Pilgrimages to Rome—Indulgences on the translation of relics—Indulgences and works of art—Lawfulness of this development—The practice of the faithful—St Clare of Assisi, St Louis of France, St Gertrude and St Bridget of Sweden—St John Cantius and Savonarola—Indulgences in the East.

THE marvellous discoveries of experimental science achieved in the last fifty years have led men to consider with peculiar interest the fact of a rising from the imperfect to the perfect, from a shapeless state to a state of growth, and on to a state of full development, in the whole range of animated creation. It has been found that, under the active influence of favourable circumstances or of special training, by virtue of a natural impulse or of the instinct that prompts every living being to self-preservation, progress takes place in that being, at first barely perceptible, but by degrees reaching considerable

proportions. Latter-day philosophy has given to this progress or development the name of "evolution."

But, as is so often the case when a deeply interesting study is ardently pursued, this principle of evolution has been pushed beyond its proper limits, and has given rise to a misconception as to its character. From the circumstance that a being admits of progressive degrees of perfection within its own species, the conclusion has been drawn that the same law brings about the transformation of one species into another, and that the lowest of created substances may thus come, in the end, to occupy the highest place. The grain of dust, it has been said, may become a plant; the plant an animal, and the animal, in its own turn, a human being.<sup>1</sup>

Setting aside, however, this exaggerated and inaccurate view of evolution, the principle contains a large measure of truth. It is certain that a process of development, leading to perfection, takes place in every being possessed of an inner vital power. Further, the very idea of life requires this; for we cannot conceive of life without action, and action itself improves the agent. It is, in fact, through inward action that a living being comes forth from a first defective state and attains to the possession of its own proper perfection. Thus viewed, evolution is a universal law by which all living things, even in the moral order, are capable of passing from a state of imperfection to a state of greater perfection.

In the doctrine of indulgences, as in everything that concerns dogma, there could not be actual specific evolution. The truths of our holy faith are as immutable as the nature of things. They may be clothed in new forms; they may be presented under new aspects,

<sup>1</sup> With regard to the theory of biological evolution and especially its bearing on the origin of the human body, see Card. Lépicier's tract, *De opere sex dierum* and *De prima hominis formatione*.

but their substance must remain the same. So with indulgences. Their nature has ever remained unaltered, but their practical application has changed. This practical application is a part of discipline, and discipline is susceptible of development and progress. That progress began when the apostles assembled in their First Council at Jerusalem, and it will end only with time.

The period that we have now to study—the second half of the middle ages—is known in history by the odious name of “the dark ages” or “the iron age.” However truly such names may apply to this period in respect of scientific discoveries or material enterprise, there is not a shadow of justification for using them where the dogma or the discipline of the Church is concerned. In both faith and morals the Church was then what she always has been and always will be—the mistress of truth; for the words of Christ cannot pass away, and he said: “Simon . . . I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.”<sup>1</sup> And so at this period the Church, whilst clinging fast to the old doctrine, was developing her discipline and adapting it to the requirements of time and place. We are now to see how she did this with respect to the practice of granting indulgences.

We shall find that the Church no longer granted remissions in an indefinite way, but that she stated exactly by how many days, quarantines (*i.e.*, periods of forty days) or years, she would shorten the penitential obligations of her children. In exchange for a prayer or a visit to a church, she now dispensed the offender from a fixed amount of the temporal penance required from him at God’s tribunal, which she would otherwise have imposed on him herself. And the keys committed to her made all such remissions valid, for whatsoever

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii 32.



Peter binds upon earth it is bound also in heaven; and whatsoever he looses on earth, it also is loosed in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

2. One of the chief grounds on which the Church granted these dispensations of a certain appointed portion of canonical penance was the celebration of saints' feasts on the anniversary of their death. The vigil of the feast was regularly sanctified by fast and prayer; and the feast itself, which was a day of rejoicing, was made yet more joyful by the remission which the Church granted, either wholly or in part, of the laborious penance that had been imposed on her children.

We cannot exactly say when this practice was introduced into the Christian community, but it certainly existed during the eleventh century, and there are many definite examples of indulgences granted on the occasion of religious anniversaries, the consecration of churches, and the construction of public works of a charitable or religious character.<sup>2</sup>

Especially was the consecration and dedication of churches one of the chief motives that induced the first pastors of the community to grant their flocks abundant indulgences. Churches are the material temples of the living God, his dwelling places on earth, and symbols at once of the heavenly Jerusalem and of the faithful soul. Hence, in dedicating these sacred buildings, the Church gave great prominence

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi 19.

<sup>2</sup> See *Dict. Apol.* II, p. 732. A quotation by Mabillon from a sacramentary of the ninth century (in the Vallicellian Library of the Roman Oratory) reads: "June 22. Feast of 1480 holy martyrs; the vigil is to be observed in silence and fasting; for the day, remission of a year's penance is granted."—*Musaeum Ital.*, a. 1685, Paris, 1724. But it is not possible to establish the authenticity of this Sacramentary, and the concession of such an indulgence is little in accordance with the customs of that period. See Palmieri, *De Poenitentia*, Appendix VI, p. 505. Prati, 1896.

to the notion of the consecration of the soul to the heavenly Spouse, by whose precious Blood she has been sanctified "and espoused . . . for ever in justice, and judgement, and in mercy."<sup>1</sup> It was therefore only becoming that, on these occasions, the Church should open her treasure of indulgences, thus enabling every soul to become a dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, and preventing it from remaining less worthy than the material temples, built out of bricks and mortar.

Benedict XIV in his Constitution *Jam inde a primis annis* of May 12, 1756,<sup>2</sup> says that in the archives of Sta Maria Maggiore there is extant a Bull of Gregory IX, mentioning an indulgence granted by Sixtus III (A.D. 432-440) on the fresh consecration of that Basilica after it had been rebuilt. This indulgence is recorded by a comparatively recent inscription, placed in the said church, near the eastern end of the right-hand aisle. In that the indulgence is said to have been one of a year and forty days.

The same inscription mentions other indulgences, which shows that this Basilica has been specially favoured by the Sovereign Pontiffs. When Clement III (A.D. 1187-1191), on the anniversary of the dedication, placed the consecrated stone on the high altar, he granted an indulgence also of a year and forty days to all who should devoutly visit the church. Honorius III (A.D. 1216-1227) granted an indulgence of the same extent from August 5, being the dedication anniversary, to August 22, the octave of the Assumption. Finally Gregory IX (A.D. 1227-1241) ratified this indulgence and confirmed the former ones.

Although the indulgence attributed to Clement III, Honorius III and Gregory IX may be accepted as authentic, it is very difficult to give credence to the

<sup>1</sup> Osee ii 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Bullarium* Bened. XIV, p. iv, Romae, 1757.

supposed concession of Sixtus III. For if, even before his time, both plenary and partial grants of remission from canonical penance may be found, yet they are not concessions of indulgences reckoned by days, quarantines or years, which are all of much later date. And in any case, if this indulgence of a year and forty days was accounted an extraordinary favour in the twelfth century, what must we think of it if referred to the fifth? Finally, if the Popes who are said to have confirmed it required a visit to the church as its condition, is it at all probable that the same indulgence could have been gained under Sixtus III without some analogous condition?

Apart from definite indulgences given by prelates for the occasion, the consecration of a church may itself be looked upon as a source of indulgence in some way. In fact, in her liturgy for that service, the Church prays for the faithful that they may be freed from the bonds of sin in consideration of the sacred place: *Vincula peccatorum solvantur*,<sup>1</sup> and she makes this request to God, not only for the living who may come there to pray, but also for the dead who are buried therein. This practice is confirmed in a homily pronounced by Pope Pius VI in the Servite church at Cesena, when he had finished its solemn consecration. He says that what he had above all desired in consecrating this church was to ensure prompt and complete deliverance for the souls of his parents and relations who were buried there.<sup>2</sup>

3. Unfortunately, no very great accuracy as regards documents was observed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; and, for the sake of gratifying a taste for the extraordinary or marvellous, writers had no objection

<sup>1</sup> Praefat. ante consecr. Altar. et orat. "Majestatem."

<sup>2</sup> See Angelo Filippo Pozzetti, O.S.M., *Per la solenne Consecrazione*, etc., Faenza, 1782, p. lii.

to fabricating apocryphal documents in support of indulgences for which they desired to claim a very early date.

For instance, they circulated by this means the supposed answer given by St Ludger, first Bishop of Mimigardeford (now Münster), to Rixfridus, Bishop of Utrecht. The latter had asked St Ludger for certain information about the canonisation of St Switbert, first bishop of Verden to the east of the Weser in Old Saxony. According to the apocryphal answer, St Leo III, visiting Charlemagne at Aix-la-Chapelle in 804, consecrated a church in the imperial palace in honour of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, and enriched it with numerous indulgences. He also (according to the same letter) dedicated other churches to the Blessed Virgin at Tongres, Viztum and other places, granting there also many indulgences; and, lastly, gave indulgences in many more places in both France and Germany. The letter further says that from Aix-la-Chapelle he went to Verden with his cardinals, archbishops and bishops; and that, after the solemn canonisation of St Switbert, he granted special indulgences to the monastery-church, which all the faithful could gain by devoutly keeping the saint's feast and by being present on that day at the ecclesiastical ceremonies.

Historians, however, have long since shown this document to be a forgery. Indeed, had there been no other proof of its being spurious, the number of indulgences mentioned in it would have been enough to condemn it; for at the beginning of the ninth century indulgences proper had not yet made their appearance, canonical penance being then still in use.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Baronius, *Annal. cum crit.* Pagii, t. xiii, a. 804, ii-viii. Lucae, 1743, p. 393. *Acta SS.* t. iii, Martii die 26, p. 639, foll. Joannes Morinus Bles. in *Comment. de Admin. Sacr. Poenit.* Book X, c. xx, Mabillon, *Praef. in saec. V. Bened.* n. 100.

Mabillon<sup>1</sup> has very little faith, and justly so, in the yearly indulgence of three years and three quarantines said to have been granted by Pope Sergius II in 847 to the ancient church of SS Sylvester and Martin in Rome, when he consecrated an altar in that Basilica (restored by his own care) and placed therein many relics of martyrs which he had collected from the cemetery of Priscilla on the Salarian Way. This, at any rate, was the account which, according to Baronius,<sup>2</sup> could be read in an inscription engraved on a marble slab, on the right-hand side of the church. However, Armellini reproduces the following text without raising any doubt on its authenticity:<sup>3</sup>

HEC SANCTORVM CORPORA TRANSLATA SVNT DE  
CIMITERIO PRISCILLAE VIA SALARIA STATVENS OMNI  
ANNO IN FESTIVITATIBVS VI ECCLESIE INDVL-  
GENTIAM TRIVM AGNORVM ET III QVADRAGENARVM  
OMNIBVS AD EA (mdem).

We must also regard as apocryphal the indulgence that we find registered in the Church of S Pudentiana.<sup>4</sup>

IN HAC OMNIUM ECCLESiarUM URBIS VETUSTISSIMA  
OLIM DOMO S PUDENTIS SENATORIS, PATRIS SS  
NOVATI ET TIMOTHEI ET SS PUDENTIANAE ET PRAX-  
EDIS VIR. FUT SS APOSTOLORUM PETRI ET PAULI  
HOSPITIUM PRIMUM, AD MARTYRUM ET CHRISTIA-  
NORUM BAPTISMUM, ET AD MISSASS ACRAMQUE SIN-  
AXIM. SUB ALTARE JACENT TRIA MILLIA COR-

<sup>1</sup> *L.c.* n. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Annal.*, t. x, a. 847, n. iv. See the note by Pagi on this point, in his *Critica*.

<sup>3</sup> Armellini, *Gli antichi cimiteri crist. di Roma e d'Italia*, p. 137, Roma, 1893. See Amort, Part I, p. 43.

<sup>4</sup> This is the titular Church of the present Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.



PORUM SS MARTYRUM, ET COPIOSUS SANCTORUM SANGUIS. VISITANTES HANC ECCLESIAM SINGULIS DIEBUS INDULGENTIAM TRIUM MILLIUM ANNORUM ET REMISSIONEM TERTIAE PARTIS PECCATORUM SUORUM, ALIASQUE QUAM PLURIMAS, ET PRAESERTIM IN DIE STATIONIS QUAE EST FERIA TERTIA POST TERTIAM DOMINICAM QUADRAGESIMAE, ET IN FESTIS SS PUDENTIS ET PUDENTIANAE.

4. But if throughout the first ten centuries of the Church no certain instance of an exactly defined indulgence is to be found, either plenary or partial, the eleventh century provides us with many, and especially for the particular occasion of the consecration of churches.

In 1040 Benedict IX granted a remarkable indulgence to all who should visit the recently-consecrated church of St Victor of Marseilles. Every penitent who went there on foot might have the doors of the temple opened to him; his sins would be remitted, and he would return purified from all stain; but he must confess them to a priest and amend his ways in future.<sup>1</sup>

No less remarkable is the indulgence granted by Alexander II at the dedication of the church of Monte Cassino. To all who should be present and to all who should visit the temple during the octave following, the Pope gave absolution from sins that had been confessed, that is the remission of the temporal punishment due to those sins.<sup>2</sup>

A little later Urban II, when consecrating the church of St Nicholas at Angers, in 1098, remitted the seventh part of their penance to all who should assist at the yearly celebration of the saint's feast in that church; and Callistus II, on dedicating a

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *op. cit. ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

church near Étampes, granted a year's indulgence for the anniversary of that occasion.<sup>1</sup>

In the thirteenth century Innocent IV (A.D. 1243-1254), wishing to increase devotion to St Elizabeth of Hungary, in the first year of his pontificate granted an indulgence of forty days to every one devoutly visiting the church raised in her honour on one of the three last days of Holy Week and on Easter Sunday.<sup>2</sup>

There is still to be seen in the church of St John before the Latin Gate an inscription declaring that Pope Celestine III granted forty days' indulgence at the dedication of that church, and this indulgence could be gained every year. The inscription is characteristic of the period, and also of the formulas then employed in granting indulgences:

✠ ANN. DNIC. INCAR. M.C. lxxxx EC  
 LESIA. SCI. JOHIS. ANTE. PORTA. LATINA. DEDICATA.  
 E. AD. HONORE DEI ET BEATI JOHIS. EVAN. P. MAN.  
 DNI CELESTINI. III. PP. PSENTIB. FERE. OMNIB:  
 CARD. TA. EPIS. QUA ET ALIIS CARD. MEN. MADIO.  
 DIE X. FESTIVIT. SCOR. GORD. ET EPIMACHI E ENIM  
 IBI REMISSIO. VERE PENITENTIB: XL. DIER. DE  
 INIVNCTA SIBI PENIA. SINGVLIS ANNIS.

✠ “ In the year of our Lord's Incarnation, M.C.LXXXX, the Church of St John before the Latin Gate was dedicated in honour of God and of the blessed John the Evangelist, by the hands of our Lord Celestine III, Pope, on the tenth day of the month of May, being the Feast of Saints Gordian and Epimachus, almost all the Cardinals being present, both those who were bishops and those who were not. For to those who are truly penitent a remission is

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *op. cit. ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Raynaldi, t. ii, a. 1244, n. xlviii.

granted of forty days every year out of the penance enjoined unto them."

The form of concession used by Urban III is also noteworthy. In the first year of his pontificate (1185), he consecrated the Church of the Parthenon of our Lady of Epeia, in the diocese of Verona; and the bull of concession is couched in these terms: "By our authority we grant to all who shall come to this place for the anniversary of its consecration—and we wish the aforesaid cardinals, patriarchs, archbishops and bishops to grant, by our apostolic authority, to those who, being truly penitent, have confessed their sins—a year and forty days remission of the penance imposed upon them for grave offences, and a quarter of what they ought to fulfil for venial sins.

"We also remit any infraction of vows that they have committed, so that they may return to the monastic life; and we further remit to their parents any failings into which they may have fallen, providing that it is not a question of enormous faults. To penitents who are 'in quarantine' we grant remission of one year in three and of forty-seven days. Those who are fulfilling the course of solemn penance we allow to resume their foot-gear."

The chronicle then continues: "The aforesaid cardinals and other prelates each acceded to the Pope's wish; they gave and granted, on his authority, the indulgence as it is written."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Du Cange, *Gloss. med. et inf. Lat.*, under word "Indulgentia." Niort, 1883. We may note here, for the understanding of this and other similar texts, that in the epoch we are now studying, the word *quarantine* (quadragena, carena, carentena, or carina) did not always mean an ordinary Lenten fast, but it often was taken for a period of time greater or lesser accordingly, which the penitents were to spend in the exercise of mortifications similar to those practised during Lent. The ordinary Lenten fast continues now for forty-six days. This fast, introduced in memory of our Lord's forty days' fast, lasted originally

These words enable us to reconstruct fairly accurately the form of penitential discipline at that epoch, and the practices that it involved.

5. The canonisation of saints was also used by the Church as an opportunity for dispensing indulgences to the faithful; and indeed it would be difficult to find a more favourable occasion for distributing spiritual favours. For is it not owing to the merits of the saints, dependent indeed on those of Jesus Christ, that the Church has come into possession of the treasure whence she draws her satisfactions? And so it was deemed suitable that she should dispense them liberally when solemnly pronouncing that one of her children has been admitted to the Beatific Vision?

The formalities now in use for the process of canonisation are of comparatively recent institution. But from the beginning of the Christian era the Church had been wont to bestow special care on keeping alive the memory of martyrs. Pope St Clement (A.D. 90-100) established in Rome a college of seven notaries whose business it was to collect and transcribe the acts of the martyrs; and Pope St Fabian (A.D. 240-253) appointed

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forty-two days, beginning on Quadragesima Sunday and ending on Holy Saturday. But as the Sundays are not fast days, there were in reality only thirty-six fast days—*i.e.*, about the tenth part of the year. Later, probably at the time of St Telesphorus (142-154), the last four days in Quinquagesima week were added, beginning with Ash Wednesday (see above, p. 159), so as to make up the mystical number of forty days. We still have traces of this addition in the Liturgy. The rubrics proper to the Lenten season, such as those prescribing the recitation of special verses and anthems at the Office and the saying of Vespers before noon, do not regard these four days. Neither was this addition adopted everywhere. Even now the Church of Milan does not observe it, this time being given to profane rejoicing, for which reason it is called *Carnevalone*. But, as we have said, the word *quadragesima* was often used to mean the penance practised during Lent, whatever its length might be: hence to be in quarantine was to be submitted to a penance similar to that practised in Lent. See Du Cange, *op. cit.*, at the word “*Carena*.”

an equal number of subdeacons to set in order the acts written by these notaries.

When a Christian had died for the faith and the fact of his martyrdom had been fully substantiated,<sup>1</sup> his name was written on the *diptychs*, and he was honoured by a public *cultus*. The Bishop's sanction, however, was needed for this, and without it no martyr could be officially acknowledged as such.<sup>2</sup> This was a most strict law; and St Optatus of Milevis relates<sup>3</sup> how a noble Carthaginian lady, named Lucilla, was severely reproved by the Archdeacon Cecilian and by the Bishop for having publicly honoured a martyr by kissing his relics before receiving communion, when he had not been officially recognised.

In the fourth century the Church began to acknowledge, in the same way, confessors who were not martyrs. The declaration of sanctity consisted either in the spontaneous assent of the people, or the building of an altar or church (Martyrium) over the tomb of the departed, or even the simple erection of a tomb in his honour,<sup>4</sup> the Bishop's sanction being required in every case. Later on, more pomp was displayed in the proceedings, so as to give them greater solemnity. St Ulrich, Bishop of Augsburg, was the first saint solemnly canonised by John XV. At the time of a Council held in the Lateran Palace, in 993, Luitolf, Ulrich's successor, read, in the Pope's presence, a "memoir" testifying to the great holiness of the deceased Bishop, whose life and virtues it sketched. The Pope consequently ordered his memory to be honoured.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See inter Opp. S. Hieron. Comment. in Ps. cxv. Opp. t. vii, P. II, pp. 439, 440. Venet. 1769.

<sup>2</sup> This acknowledgement was called "*vindicatio martyris*."

<sup>3</sup> Lib. I, adv. Parmen.

<sup>4</sup> See St Bede, Book IV, c. xxx and xix, where he gives the examples of St Cuthbert and St Etheldreda.

<sup>5</sup> Mabillon, *op. cit.* n. 99.



For several centuries the Bishops exercised this power freely, each in his own church, which practice was tacitly authorised by the Holy See and implicitly recognised by the universal Church. But by degrees the instinctive spirit of unity gathered together and placed in the hands of the chief authority all the separate threads of this department of Catholic liturgy. From the tenth century onwards, and probably even earlier, the explicit sanction of the supreme Pontiff was required for the canonisation of saints—not that the power of the metropolitans was withdrawn from them, but they had in each case to inform the Pope, who had to give his consent.

Even this arrangement, however, did not constitute perfect unity; and in so important a matter absolute uniformity became necessary, the question being of a subject intimately connected with dogma, since “one might as well adore the devil as pay honour to a lost soul.”<sup>1</sup> For this reason we find that Pope Alexander III (A.D. 1159–1181) placed canonisation of the saints amongst the “major causes,” and reserved it for the exclusive judgement of the Holy See. He himself canonised St Edward the Confessor (1161), St Thomas of Canterbury (1172), and St Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux (1174).<sup>2</sup>

We have already said that canonisations became occasions in the Church for granting indulgences. Thus Honorius III, on the canonisation of St Lawrence, Archbishop of Dublin, in 1225, granted twenty days’ remission of penance.<sup>3</sup> This St Lawrence had a special esteem for the Pope’s authority in the matter of pardons. Being named by Alexander III apostolic legate in Ireland, he would not use the powers granted

<sup>1</sup> Melchior Canus, *De Locis Theol.*, Book V, c. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Mabillon, *op. cit.* n. 91 and foll.

<sup>3</sup> *Bull. Rom.*, Romae, 1740, t. iii, p. 242.

to him in that capacity for absolving clerics who had fallen into incontinence, but sent them to Rome to get absolution from the Pope.<sup>1</sup>

At the canonisation of St Anthony of Padua in 1232, Gregory IX granted a year's indulgence;<sup>2</sup> and for that of St Elizabeth of Hungary, in 1235, a year and forty days.<sup>3</sup> All these examples go to show how the Church increased her liberality in this matter little by little.

As long as the Bishops exercised their individual power of canonising, they acted as the Popes did in later days, and celebrated such occasions by granting remissions of penance. In 1153, before Alexander III had regulated the matter, the Archbishop of Rouen, Hugh, went to the Abbey of St Martin of Pontoise. There he caused the tomb of St Walter, formerly Abbot of the monastery, to be opened, immediately granted indulgences, and had the saint's body transferred to a new and more precious tomb. These are the words of his "grant":

"The unspeakable goodness of our Redeemer, who pardons sinners, and the testimony of his servant, our father St Walter, whose relics this church respectfully guards, and whose glorious miracles give us joy, moved our pious ancestors to show mercy towards penitents. Therefore we ourselves have decided to give all the faithful who shall beg the protection of the blessed Abbot Walter an indulgence from the penance imposed upon them. To those who have received for their offences penances to last seven years, provided they devoutly confess their sins and are repentant, we remit a whole year, and a third of the years still left to be done. To those who have fourteen years of

<sup>1</sup> Vita ap. Sur. c. xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Bulla Canon., ap. Act SS. Jun. t. ii, die 13, p. 724, col 2 D.

<sup>3</sup> Bull. Rom., l.c. p. 287.

penance to do we remit two years and a third of the years remaining. Of twenty years we remit three and a third of the remainder. For forty years or more of penance, we remit half and again a third of the remainder. As to children, whether baptised or not, who have died before the age of seven years through their parents' negligence, we remit the parents' penance, except on Fridays; and, even on that day also, if the penitent goes to church, he may receive whatever mitigation the priest may choose to grant him. In the case of a sick penitent, of a woman with child or of a person too weak to fast, let them say seven *Pater nosters* and give charity according to their means. We remit a third of the penance due to them for their slight faults, and entirely forgive the sins they have forgotten.

"As to me," continues the Archbishop, "I confess in all sincerity that I am unworthy and burdened with grievous sins and early faults; therefore I have much need of many and great mercies from God."<sup>1</sup>

The mode of granting this indulgence must be noted. It is, so to speak, the very opposite of the present method.

Now, the prelate's first object in granting an indulgence is to abridge the penance due for sins, whatever it may be, by so many days or years; but, then, in doing this, his attention was chiefly directed to penance itself, so as to shorten it by a third or any other portion that he chose. Now, an indulgence is the same for all; then, it varied with the length of the penance; so that formerly the sinner received a greater indulgence in proportion as his penalty was greater.

The above document is a valuable testimony to the liberality of Bishops in granting indulgences when they

<sup>1</sup> Act SS., in Vita S. Gualterii Abb., die 8 April. t. i, p. 768, col. 1.

possessed the power, the Holy See giving tacit consent to such a mode of using episcopal jurisdiction, upon which no restriction had yet been placed.<sup>1</sup>

6. The building and consecration of churches, as we have already said, was a common occasion for granting indulgences; and we will here give the texts of one or two concessions of the kind.

In the year 1000, Ponce, Bishop of Arles, granted an indulgence for the building and consecration of the Church of Montmajour.

In the document of the concession it is said that the Bishop, with the consent of his canons, wishes to grant to the faithful, in favour of this church, the following benefit: Any one "who has been forbidden for a penance to enter the church, to receive the sacred Body of Christ or the kiss of peace, to have his hair shorn or his beard shaven, to wear linen garments, to be godfather at a baptism, and to taste anything but bread and water on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays" (all of which were, at that time, marks of public penance), "if he goes to this church on the dedication day, or even on any day at all once in the year, and there keeps vigil (*cum sua vigilia*), and further contributes to the building of St Mary's Church on Montmajour; by the authority of our Lord Jesus and our own he shall receive, from the day on which he has observed the vigil, absolution of a third of his more grievous sins for which he has already received a penance, up to the return of the same date on the following year or the date of the dedication (*usque eo ad ipsum diem revertentis anni, vel datarum, in quo dedicatio celebrabitur praelibatae Ecclesiae*); during the whole of such year he shall be allowed to enter any church, to receive communion and the kiss of peace, to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Amort, *De Origine*, etc., Part I, sect. iv, n. 15, pp. 129 *sqq.*; Part II, sect. iv, n. 69, p. 226.

cut his hair and shave his beard, to wear linen garments, and to stand godfather, except during Lent and on the Ember days. If his penance is for three days a week, we remit one of them; and if it is for only one day, we remit that altogether, on condition that he feeds three poor men. . . . Lastly, as to those who have confessed their lesser sins and received penance for them, if they come to the dedication of the said church, visit it once a year, observing a vigil, and help in the building of St Mary's, we absolve them from half the penance imposed upon them for one year or up to the date (*usque ad unum annum, vel datarum*) of the dedication."<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that the consent of the canons mentioned in the grant must not be looked upon as a necessary condition to the validity of the indulgence, as in this matter the episcopal power has at no time been dependent on the will of the canons. We must see in the expression only a mark of deference to the chief dignitaries of the church, who are held to form, morally, one body with the Bishop.

However, the tenor of this document is, as appears especially from the last words quoted, somewhat obscure. The main conclusion that can be gathered therefrom is that, at the dedication of the above-mentioned church, the penitent could, if he wished it, be entirely freed from the penance imposed upon him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *Praef. ad saec. V. Bened.* n. III.

<sup>2</sup> Luc d'Achéry, *Spicileg.*, vi, 427. It should be noted that serious doubts have also been entertained regarding the genuineness of this document. However this may be, the observation of N. Paulus is very much appropriate. He writes: "Ob echt oder unecht, diese Urkunde . . . zeigt jedenfalls dass es damals schon üblich war, den Sterbenden besondere Ablassse zu gewähren. Wie wären sonst die Mönche von Montmajour auf den Gedanken gekommen, das erwähnte Privilegium zu beanspruchen? Tatsächlich wird der eigentümliche Ablass für den Fall des Ablebens erwähnt in anderen Urkunden, die als echt gelten können."—"Die Anfänge des Sterbeablasses," *Theologia und Glaube*, Paderborn, Jahrg. vi, 1914, Heft 1, p. 12.



Moreover, the association of authorities in granting definite indulgences was rather common at that time; several Bishops would join to grant them. Thus do we find, at a somewhat later date (1327), the concession of an indulgence of forty days made by twelve Bishops to all who should on certain days visit the Servite Church at Erfurt in Saxony; but the consent of the diocesan ordinary is included as a condition, *dummodo dioecesani voluntas ad id accesserit et consensus*. The said Bishop of the place, one Mathias, not only confirmed this grant, but himself added forty days to it, subject to one reservation, which it is important to observe in view of accusations connected with the abuse of indulgences to be considered later: *Proviso tamen quod haec nostra indulgentia ad quaestus publicos seu illicitos non trahatur*, "provided that our indulgence is not used for illicitly obtaining public moneys."<sup>1</sup>

To return to the eleventh century. To this epoch belongs a concession substantially similar to that of Ponce of Arles. Its author was Bishop Raimbaud, and its occasion the dedication of Santa Maria de Correns (A.D. 1065). To the penitents who had assisted at this ceremony he remitted a third part of their penalty, granting them also the right to enter into the church for one year and absolution in case of death, which power he protested to have received from St Peter.<sup>2</sup>

Again, Anselm, Bishop of Milan, after consecrating the church of the Holy Sepulchre, decreed among other things that for eight days before and after the anniversary of that solemnity there should be a "truce" throughout the whole country, so that those who could not go and venerate the real tomb of our Lord, might

<sup>1</sup> *Monumenta Ord. Serv. S. Mariae*, Brussels, t. iii, fasc. 3, 1900. Other concessions of the same kind may be found therein.

<sup>2</sup> Luc d'Achéry, *Spicileg.*, vi, 441.

obtain the remission of one third of their sins, *i.e.*, of the penalty due for their sins, by visiting this church (A.D. 1100).<sup>1</sup>

In the old Temple church in London there still exists an ancient Latin inscription, engraved over the chief door, and dated A.D. 1185. It states that Heraclius, Patriarch of the church of the Holy Resurrection, consecrated the Temple church in honour of the Blessed Mary, on February 10, 1185, and remitted sixty days' penance to be gained yearly by those who would visit the said church. The inscription is as follows:

✠ ANNO . AB . INCARNATIONE . DOMINI . M.C.L.X.X.X.V.  
DEDICATA . HEC . ECCLESIA . IN . HONORE . BEATE .  
MARIE . A . DNO . ERACLIO . DEI . GRA . SCE . RESVREC-  
TIONIS . ECCLESIE . PATRIARCHA . IIII . IDVS . FEBRVARII .  
Q . EAM . ANNATIM . PETENTIBVS . DE . IIVNTA . S .  
PENITETIA . LX . DIES . INDVLSIT.<sup>2</sup>

All the above indulgences, it will be observed, were only partial. However, Bishops sometimes granted plenary ones also.

The first example of such a concession mentioned in history goes back to about the year 1159. The small town of Calatrava, in Castille, being besieged by the Arabs, John, Archbishop of Toledo, granted to all who helped against the enemy remission of all their sins.<sup>3</sup>

However, the Lateran Council (A.D. 1215) limited the power of Bishops to the granting of a hundred days on the dedication of a church, and of forty days on other occasions. Thus, in the year 1284, Simon, Archbishop of Bourges, visiting the Abbey of Anglia in

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *l.c.* n. 112; Luc d'Achéry, *Spicileg.*, iii, 402.

<sup>2</sup> On the solemnities that accompanied the consecration of churches in England, see Lingard's *The Antiquities of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, cap. vii, n. 6. Edit. Fithian, Philadelphia,

<sup>3</sup> Mariana, *Hist. d'Espagne*, XI,

Poitiers, granted a hundred days of indulgence "by authority of our Holy Father the Pope and of the legate," and forty days in his own name, to certain men who had taken the cross in favour of Aragon.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Henry, Bishop of Nantes, grants only ten days' indulgence to those who assist at the whole of Mass. His successor, Daniel, confirms this grant for all who are repentant and who have confessed their sins, provided that they remain on their knees from the elevation of the Host to that of the chalice; upon which Mabillon remarks that piety must have become very faint when it needed rousing in this way.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the decrees of the Lateran Council, however, certain prelates continued to grant abundant indulgences. For instance, in the year 1288, John, of the Teutonic Order, Bishop of Laconia, granted a hundred days' remission of penance due for mortal sins, and a year of that for venial sins, to all who visited the Monastery of Scutera, in the diocese of Strasburg.<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes Bishops granted indulgences for the dedication of buildings intended for philanthropic purposes, such as one of eighty-four days granted by the Archbishop of Magdeburg in 1381, at the dedication of the new hospital at Halle, whose church and cemetery he consecrated.

We have said already that only Bishops possess of divine right the power of granting indulgences.<sup>4</sup> Hence Abbots have ordinarily no such power, and at the Lateran Council Innocent III severely reprimanded those who arrogated this right to themselves. Yet, in the year 1299, we find Thomas, Abbot of Monte Cassino, granting a remission of forty days from penances imposed to all who, being truly contrite and

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *Praef. in saec. V*, Bened. n. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Mabillon, *l.c.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See chap. ii, n. 4.

having confessed their sins, should devoutly visit the abbey-church on certain appointed feasts. Abbot Emeric did the same; but in all probability both were acting by virtue of a special indult, or of some peculiar custom tacitly recognised by the Popes.<sup>1</sup>

7. To this period, that is from the eleventh century onward, belongs the practice of granting indulgences on behalf of the dying, which in the current ecclesiastical language are now styled *in articulo mortis*, and which the Germans call *Sterbeablässe*.

Grants of this kind are met with exceedingly frequently in documents of the time, being sometimes made by the Pope directly, sometimes through the confessor's mediation.

A detailed account of all these grants would prove tedious reading, as they all more or less resemble one another. Special mention, however, may be made of the very extensive concession made by Clement VI, in 1348, in favour of persons who fell victims to that dreadful scourge, known as the black death, which then afflicted the whole of Europe. It may be noted that England was an object of special attention on the part of the Popes, as may be gathered by the detailed account of the grants made by the aforesaid Pope to the various dioceses of that country.<sup>2</sup>

8. Returning to the Bishops' power of granting indulgences, we may gather from the documents of the time that they were perfectly well aware that their authority in this matter, whatever the source whence it springs, depends for its exercise on the power of the Supreme Pontiff, who has been set by Christ to feed not only the lambs, that is the faithful, but also the

<sup>1</sup> Du Cange, *Gloss. Med. et Inf. Lat.*, under heading "Indulgentia." See Amort, *De Origine*, etc., Part I, sect. iv, pp. 126 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> This subject, with its proper references, is dealt with at length by N. Paulus, in his article "Die Anfänge des Sterbeablasses," in *Geschichte*, etc., B. II, xix, p. 149 *sqq.*

sheep, that is the pastors. For the faculty of granting indulgences flows immediately from the power of the keys, the fullness of which resides originally and ordinarily in the person of the Bishop of Rome. Hence, those alone can lawfully grant indulgences whose power to do so has been at least tacitly recognised by the Sovereign Pontiff; for no one can judge and remit sins who does not hold his credentials from the Pope.

Now during the first ages of the Church the Popes had tacitly sanctioned the full use of this power by the Bishops. Later, as religion spread over the world, it was necessary to establish the principle of unity, which was to be the means of keeping vast multitudes together so as to avoid schisms. Hence, the unlimited exercise of the faculty was by degrees withdrawn from Bishops and concentrated in the person of the Sovereign Pontiff. This was not done in the beginning by any special explicit act. Thus Bishops are found having recourse to Rome in the more difficult cases, and humbly begging the Pope to grant the indulgence for the sins committed by members of their flocks.

At the end of the ninth century the Bavarian Bishops had recourse to Pope John IX (898-900), begging him in virtue of the fullness of his pontifical authority to be pleased to absolve the soul of the Emperor Arnulf, who had just died.<sup>1</sup>

Later, Remigius, Bishop of Lincoln, sent a priest guilty of homicide to the Apostolic See that he might get the required dispensation for saying Mass from the Pope. St Gregory VII was at Terracina when the culprit presented himself before him with a letter from Remigius. On December 2, 1073, he gave his answer to the Bishop. He absolutely refused the priest's request, and forbade his being allowed again to celebrate the sacred mysteries. As in the same letter the

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *l.c.* n. 108.



Bishop had asked for himself an "absolution" of the kind that we now call an indulgence, the Pope granted it to him in these terms: "Supported by the authority of the princes of the apostles, Peter and Paul, whose office we fill, though unworthily, we have thought well to send thee absolution of thy sins, according to thy request, provided that thou continue in the practice of good works, lamenting thy past failings as much as thou canst and so making thy body into a pure temple for the Divinity."<sup>1</sup>

Here we have an instance of the care always taken by the Church in granting indulgences, to impress on her children the obligation of reforming their morals, doing penance for past faults, and so living as to make their lives an uninterrupted hymn of praise to the Almighty.

9. It is somewhere about this period that we first find indulgences granted for the recitation of certain prayers. In a Bull, dated 1255, addressed to St Louis of France, Alexander IV, after praising his great virtue and courage, confers upon him and upon the queen, as also upon his successors on the throne, the privilege of never coming under sentence of excommunication or interdict without special mention. He then grants ten days' indulgence to all who shall pray to God for the king during his life and after his death for ten years.<sup>2</sup> Later, in 1289, Nicholas IV granted the same indulgence to those who should pray for Charles, King of Sicily,<sup>3</sup> and the Popes of the following centuries were no less generous in respect of some other princes.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Baronius, *Annal. Eccl.*, t. ix, an. 1073, n. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Apud Raynaldi, nn. 42, 45. St Thomas attributes this indulgence to Innocent IV, predecessor of Alexander IV. See IV Sent., dist. xx, a. 3; quaest. iii ad 2.

<sup>3</sup> Amort, *op. cit.*, Part I, sect. vii, p. 194; Raynaldi, ad an. 1309, n. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Amort, *l.c.*, pp. 198, 199.

The author of *Fasciculus Temporum* also tells us that in the year 1268 Clement IV, at the request of St Louis of France, granted the faithful an indulgence of three years each time that they should say or read these words: "Praised be the sweet Name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of his glorious Mother the Virgin Mary, for ever and ever. Amen. May the Virgin Mary with her divine Son bless us. Amen."<sup>1</sup>

At this same period we find indulgences granted, in reward of their charity, to those who pray for the souls in purgatory. To give but one example: Innocent IV, in 1251, at the request of Berengaria, daughter of Ferdinand III, King of Castile and Leon, granted a special indulgence to all who should pray for the soul of her grandmother. "Considering," says the Pope, "that it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, and desiring that this sort of prayer should be so much the more practised by the faithful as they expect a more abundant reward for themselves."<sup>2</sup>

To the same time also must be referred the concession of indulgences for the pious practice of saying the *Angelus*. Some authors attribute the institution of this custom to the Seraphic Doctor, St Bonaventure. Whilst he was General of the Franciscans, in a chapter held at Pisa, he ordered all the priests of the Order to say the Angelic Salutation three times every evening, at the sound of a bell, in honour of the Incarnation. This practice quickly spread throughout the world, and particularly in France, in the Church of Saintes. John XXII, in 1318, published an indulgence, confirmed nine years afterwards, of ten days to be gained each time the *Angelus* was said kneeling in the evening.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Breviarum Hist. Chron. crit. Franc. Pagi, ad annum 1268, t. ii, Clem. IV, n. xxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Raynaldi, t. ii, A.D. 1251, n. xxviii.

<sup>3</sup> Raynaldi, A.D. 1318, n. 58; *ibid.*, A.D. 1327, n. 54.

In many places the faithful adopted the custom of reciting the *Angelus* at the *ignitegium* (curfew), *i.e.*, when the bell was rung at night for the fires to be covered, the lights to be put out and the people to go to bed. "We order," says the Council of Sens (A.D. 1347), "the rigorous observance of the rule made by Pope John XXII to say the *Ave Maria* three times at the hour of curfew."<sup>1</sup>

In other places the *Ave Maria* was appointed at sundown, and the custom was so generally adopted, that the sunset hour in Italy is to this day called the *Ave Maria*.

In course of time the *Ave* of the morning was added to that of the evening and still richer indulgences were bestowed on the devotion. A synod at Béziers, in 1369, orders all the faithful, when they hear the bell ring at dawn, to say the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria* three times, and grants them for this twenty days' indulgence in remission of their sins.<sup>2</sup> The Council of Cologne of 1428 orders three strokes of the great church bell to be sounded every day at sunrise to make the faithful begin their day by remembering the *compassion* of the Blessed Virgin, just as they rang it in the evening for the salutation of Mary. At the same time it grants forty days' indulgence to all who shall say three *Ave Marias* on their knees at the sound of the bell.

The same council also orders the great bell to be rung every Friday towards the middle of the day, and grants a further indulgence of forty days for three *Paters* and *Aves* said in remembrance of our Lord's Passion.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cap. xiii, Du Cange, under heading *Angelus*, § 6. Cf. Statuta Simonis Episc. Nanneten., same place. The old custom of *ignitegium*, the English "curfew," is called in French *couvre-feu* and also *quevre-feu*.

<sup>2</sup> Du Cange, *l.c.*

<sup>3</sup> Mansi, Synodus Coloniensis, c. 10, t. xxviii, col. 1056.

In 1472 Louis XI of France ordered a solemn procession to be held in Paris on May 1, on which occasion the bells were to be rung at midday, so that everybody might say the *Angelus* and *Ave Maria*. He wished by this means to call down the Blessed Virgin's protection on his country.<sup>1</sup> Callistus III had already, in the year 1456, given a similar direction in order to obtain the favour of heaven for the Christian princes who had joined the armies against the Turks, then threatening to invade Europe under Mahomet II;<sup>2</sup> and fresh indulgences were continually given as time went on to this pious custom, so especially calculated to keep alive in men's hearts that chief mystery of our faith, the Incarnation.

In England the devotion took quite a peculiar development; so that when, a century later, Henry VIII wished to emphasise his separation from Rome and to have himself acknowledged as sole head of the English Church, he strictly forbade the ringing of the *Ave Maria*, or, as it was also called, the *Gabriel Bell*. The continuation of such a custom, recognised as emanating from the Popes, would have been an obstacle to his projects of revolt against the Holy See.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert Gaguin, *Hist. Gall. Ludovic. XI*, ii.

<sup>2</sup> Platina, *In Vita Callixti III*.

<sup>3</sup> See Fr. Bridgett, C.S.S.R., *The Angelus and the See of Peter*, Catholic Truth Society. For further information on the subject of the *Angelus*, the reader may turn to Father Herbert Thurston's valuable articles in the *Month*, "Our Popular Devotions—V. The Angelus," January, 1902, pp. 61 *sqq.*; May, 1902, pp. 518 *sqq.*; "The Antiquity of the Angelus," January, 1904, pp. 57 *sqq.* In these articles interesting details are given as to the origin and development of this devotion, and precise indications are also furnished on the literature referring to this subject. See also Mgr. Albert Battandier, in his *Annuaire Pontifical Catholique*, a. 1900, pp. 38-41, and a. 1905, pp. 432-438. This last essay is an abridgement of a more considerable work by Father Thomas Esser, O.P., who has published a series of articles on this subject in the *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 1902. See also Bertier, *Dict. Theol.*, I, 1278, and Thurston, *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, I, 486.

10. We have said above that one of the chief objects of the faithful in making pilgrimages to the Holy Land and to Rome in the Middle Ages was to obtain a mitigation of the temporal punishment due to their sins, proffered them through the ministration of the lawful prelates. This mitigation, which in time became a formal grant of fixed indulgences, was at first of a rather vague and confused nature.

Towards the end of the tenth century St Ulrich, Bishop of Augsburg, knowing that he had not much longer to live, went to Rome on a pilgrimage. It was his second visit to the Eternal City. He fulfilled all the vows he had made with great devotion. After he had received valuable privileges and rich indulgences (*gravissimorum emolumentorum et indulgentiarum donis acceptis*), he took leave of the Pope, and returned to his own diocese.<sup>1</sup> It would be unscientific to take the word indulgence here in the precise sense it now has.

At first pilgrims could only learn from the Pontiff's own lips what indulgences he would be pleased to grant them. But, by degrees, special ones were granted permanently to all who visited the churches at Rome. We have an instance of this in a concession made by Pascal II in 1116, on the occasion of a Council held by him at the Lateran: "To all those who, either because of the Council or for the good of their souls, shall visit the tombs of the holy apostles, if they are under penance for grave sins, he grants an indulgence of forty days."<sup>2</sup>

The indulgences that came to be granted in course of time by the Popes for various pilgrimages became so numerous that it was impossible to draw up an exact catalogue of them, and it was forbidden, under

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *Praef. in saec. V. Bened.*, n. 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Urspergensis*, apud *Baron. h. a.*, n. vi.



pain of excommunication, to publish their number. We must note, however, on account of the historical importance of the place to which it is attached, the indulgence called "very plenary" (*plenissima*) granted by Nicholas IV (A.D. 1292) to those who should visit the church of the holy martyr Saturninus, on the Via Salaria Nuova. This church, burnt down in the time of Felix IV and rebuilt under his care, was situated over the cemetery of Thrason, or *ad S. Saturninum*.<sup>1</sup>

11. Amongst the most celebrated sanctuaries of the Middle Ages we must especially mention that of the Portiuncula, the origin of whose famous "pardon" is given in the Franciscan Annals:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Aringhi, *Roma Subterranea*, t. ii, l. iv. cap. xxxiii, pp. 232-233, Romae, 1651. On this cemetery see Armellini, *Lezioni di Archeologia Cristiana*, pp. 175 *sqq.*, Rome, 1898; Marucchi, *Eléments d'Archéologie Chrétienne*, t. i, p. 61, Rome, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> As our object here is not to discuss the critical value of these accounts, we need only refer the reader to three articles by Nikolaus Paulus, "Die Bewilligung des Portiuncula-Ablasses. Eine Kritische Untersuchung," in [the *Katholik* of Mainz, 1899, t. i, pp. 97-125; "Zur Geschichte des Portiuncula-Ablasses," in the same periodical, 1901, t. ii, pp. 185-187. "Der Portiuncula-Ablasse," in *Geschichte, etc.*, II B., xxvi, pp. 302 *sqq.* See also *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 1924, p. 644, and Dec. S. Penit., July 10, 1924, Acta. Ap. Sedis., 1924, p. 345, enumerating the privileges of this indulgence. Although these articles may perhaps not be considered as conclusive, yet the abundant information they contain may greatly help the student towards distinguishing in the Portiuncula indulgence what is historical truth from what is the outcome of fiction. But whatever view one may entertain on the subject, care should be taken not to identify the extravagant statements of irresponsible writers with the indulgence itself. The words of the above quoted author (last quotation) should here be noted: "Ist auch der Ablass von Honorius III nicht bewilligt worden, so haben ihn doch spätere Päpste wiederholt bestätigt und erneuert." Here again we must point out how arbitrary are Dr. Lea's observations on this subject (*op. cit.* pp. 236-252). The words of Cardinal Gasquet come here very fittingly: "Many people come to history to find evidence for something they wish to prove, and their eyes consequently magnify what they expect to see, whilst, probably quite unconsciously, they obscure, or diminish, or discount what does not accord with their preconceived notions."—*Henry III and the Church*, Introduction, p. ix, London, 1905.

The Portiuncula is situated about two miles from the town of Assisi. Its name, *portiuncula*, comes from its having been originally a small portion of the lands belonging to the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Subasio.

On this spot there was a church called St Mary of the Angels, almost entirely ruined and quite deserted. At the beginning of his vocation St Francis repaired to this church and resolved to rebuild it. The place subsequently pleased him so much that he settled there, and there also laid the foundation of his Order.

In the year 1221, as he was one day praying in that church, he begged our Lord, through the intercession of his most holy Mother, to grant a plenary indulgence to all who—being contrite and shriven—should visit the church. Jesus Christ granted his request, but on condition that Francis should get this indulgence confirmed by the Supreme Pontiff.

Obedient to the heavenly command, the holy patriarch went to Pope Honorius III, who was then governing the Church, and obtained the desired sanction. "The Pope, however, protested that the Holy See was not in the habit of granting an indulgence of that kind," says Brother Ranieri, who declares that he had the information from one of St Francis's companions.<sup>1</sup> However, two years later, in 1223, the Pope, yielding to the entreaties of St Francis to whom Christ had shown his will in another vision, appointed August 2—the anniversary of the dedication of the church—for gaining this indulgence, and decreed that it might be gained every year on the same day.

The first promulgation of this great Pardon took place on August 1 of this same year, St Francis pronouncing an eloquent discourse on the value of indulgences. After that the Bishops of Assisi, Perugia, Todi, Spoleto, Foligno, Nocera and Gubbio, whom the

<sup>1</sup> See Pagi, *Critica Baronii*, ad an. 487, n. vii.

Pope had sent on purpose, had to publish the grant, no matter how indignant they might feel at so extraordinary a favour.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of the following centuries the Sovereign Pontiffs extended this indulgence to all the churches of the Franciscan Order. In more recent times, an indulgence of a similar kind has been granted to the churches of several religious Orders—to the Dominicans, the Minims, the Servites, the Carmelites, etc., for their respective principal feasts.

Such is the celebrated *Portiuncula Indulgence*, or "great Pardon of Assisi." Having been granted at our Lord's own particular desire, it establishes according to Bellarmine<sup>2</sup> three important dogmas of Catholic faith—the truth of indulgences, the power of the Pope in respect of them, and the need for auricular confession. To this we may add that it is a reminder of the existence of purgatory, as it may be gained for the dead *toties quoties*, i.e., as often as one visits the church and says the prescribed prayers. Its importance and value may be understood from the fact that its concession in the Church at Assisi was one of the few indulgences which were not suspended during the Jubilee of 1925.<sup>3</sup>

In England, besides the sanctuary of St Peter at Peterborough already spoken of,<sup>4</sup> and that of St

<sup>1</sup> See Bened. XIV, *De Syn. Dioeces.*, lib. XIII, 18, n. 4, 5; also his *Disquisitio de Ind. Portiunculae*, amongst his *Opuscula Miscellanea*. Cf. Luke Wadding, *Ann. Min.* ad a. 1223.

<sup>2</sup> *De Indulg.*, Book II, c. xx.

<sup>3</sup> A.A.S. xvi, p. 305.

<sup>4</sup> Part II, chap. iii, n. 9. The following are Pope Agatho's own words in the rescript sent to King Ethelred by which he grants indulgence for their sins to the pilgrims: "Concedimus . . . quatenus am vos quam ceteri populi vestri imperii, totius quoque Britanniae, sed et proximorum regnorum nationes, quicumque, vel viae longinquitate, vel varia necessitudine praepediti, Romae beatum Petrum in Urbe sua revisere non sufficitis, hic cum spiritu vobis cohabitantem plena fide requiratis, hic vota persolvatis, hic absolutionem peccatorum et apostolicam benedic-

Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, there was the shrine of another St Thomas, Bishop of Hereford, which, in the fourteenth century, also became a centre of devotion and a source of indulgences. By a letter given at Avignon on April 20, 1320, John XXII, who had canonised the holy Bishop, granted indulgences, *praemia indulgentiarum*, to all who should visit his tomb on the day of his feast and throughout its octave.<sup>1</sup>

12. But the spirit of unity was developing every day more and more in the Church, and by degrees the faithful came to choose Rome rather than any other place as the goal of their pilgrimages. Their one great wish was to see Peter, living in his successor, and to beg of him both pardon for their past faults and remission of the penalty that they had incurred, and for which they were liable before God as well as before the Church. Their hope was not a vain one, for they knew that what Peter loosens on earth is loosed also in heaven. Above all, it should be remembered that in ages when communication with Rome was difficult, the Roman pilgrimage was one of the chief practical ways of keeping before the minds of the faithful the fact that the unity of the universal Church was centred in the Apostolic See.

This is why pilgrimages to Rome became so frequent. The good felt that they could obtain sanction for their holy aspirations only by submitting them to Peter's successor, and they considered it their duty to go and venerate the places sanctified by the blood of martyrs. The sinners hoped to find pardon in the place where the treasures of the Church lie ever open. Thus

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tionem per ipsum ligandi ac solvendi principem fideliter speretis, et justa desideria cum precibus exaudiri ac coeli januam vobis aperiri credatis." — Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, Lond. 1817, p. 379.

<sup>1</sup> Raynaldi, A.D. 1320, n. 46.

it came about that great crowds of folk "longed on pilgrimage" to Rome, from England, France, Germany and even far more distant countries.

Naturally, these pilgrims took care to bring back with them some kind of keepsake of the Eternal City. Those who had been interested in particular places, and were at the same time skilled in penmanship, made such plans or drawings as their ability enabled them to do, and brought them home. Thus William of Malmesbury, a twelfth-century author, gave a plan of Rome and her cemeteries in his work *de Rebus gestis Regum Anglorum*,<sup>1</sup> whilst writing an account of the journey to Rome made by pilgrims and crusaders in the time of Urban II. He little guessed, as he wrote his itinerary, what use would come to be made of it in after times for verifying the earlier topography of Rome in connexion with the work of later archæologists.<sup>2</sup>

Another thing frequently done by the enthusiastic pilgrims was to write books on their return about the wonders of Rome, *mirabilia urbis Romae*. Further, both to keep themselves in mind of the spiritual treasures they had gathered and to persuade others to follow their example, they often made catalogues of the indulgences that might be gained by visiting various holy places and the relics preserved therein. These catalogues were called *Libri Indulgentiarum*.<sup>3</sup>

At St Sebastian's on the Appian Way, just above one of the entrances to the catacombs, there is an in-

<sup>1</sup> Frankfort 1601.

<sup>2</sup> See Armellini, *Gli Antichi Cimiteri*, etc., p. 96 sqq., where the learned archæologist also treats at some length of other itineraries which describe the Roman pilgrimages of mediæval times.

<sup>3</sup> The chief libraries of Europe possess manuscripts of these *Libri Indulgentiarum*, which go back to the fifteenth century, or even to the end of the fourteenth. They were printed in the second half of the fifteenth century.—See P. Allard, *Rome Souterraine*, seconde éd., Paris, 1874, Part III, n. 4.



scription dating from the time of these mediæval pilgrimages, which sets forth the object of those who went to Rome. Here is the text:

HOC EST COEMETERIVM B. CALLIXTI PAPAE ET MARTY-  
RIS INCLITI QVICVMQVE ILLVD CONTRITVS ET CONFESSVS  
INGRESSVS FVERIT PLENAM REMISSIONEM OMNIVM PEC-  
CATORVM SVORVM OBTINEBIT PER MERITA GLORIOSA  
CENTVM SEPTUAGINTA QVATVOR MILLIVM SANCTORVM  
MARTYRVM VNA CVM QVADRAGINTA SEX SVMMIS PONTIFI-  
CIBVS QVORVM IBI CORPORA IN PACE SEPVLTA SUNT QVI  
OMNES EX MAGNA TRIBVLATIONE VENERVNT ET UT  
HEREDES FIERENT IN DOMO DOMINI MORTIS SVPPLICIVM  
PRO CHRISTI NOMINE PERTULERVNT.”<sup>1</sup>

It might therefore be said of the fortunate pilgrim,  
with Lord Byron,

Not in vain  
He wore his sandal-shoon and scallop-shell.<sup>2</sup>

Very naturally this concourse of pilgrims to Rome became the object of some opposition. Certain people “trembled for fear where there was no fear.”<sup>3</sup> They feared lest the benignity of the Roman Pontiff, who after his Master’s example, desires “mercy and not sacrifice,”<sup>4</sup> should do injury in the long run to the Church. They gave this danger as their reason for

<sup>1</sup> This is only a recent copy of the ancient inscription, which has been destroyed by the effects of time. It shows plainly that one of the pilgrims’ motives in visiting the martyrs’ relics was to gain indulgences. It should be remembered that this cemetery, whose proper name is *ad Catacumbas*, was confused with that of St Callistus until the time of J. B. de Rossi’s discoveries. As to the numbers quoted in it of 174,000 martyrs and 46 popes buried there, these must be looked upon rather as pious imaginations than as historic facts. We wonder how it is that Mr. Lea (*op. cit.*, p. 454) reproduces them with no comment.—See Armellini, *Gli antichi Cimiteri di Roma e d’Italia*, Rome, 1893, Part III, c. xxxii.

<sup>2</sup> *Childe Harold*, canto iv.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. lii 6.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. ix 13

opposing the pilgrimages. In the year 1022 the Council of Selingstadt forbade any pilgrim going to Rome without first doing some fitting penance and obtaining the Bishop's leave. The members of that assembly feared lest the Pope should loose the pilgrims from all their sins.<sup>1</sup>

But the Pope, in granting remission of their debt to penitent pilgrims, was only using the power received from Christ Himself, and no one could reasonably offer opposition to his doing so. This fact is unanimously recognised by the fathers of the Council of Limoges (A.D. 1031), who say: "We have learnt from the Popes and the other Fathers that, if a Bishop has subjected one of his diocesans to penance, and sends him to the Pope in order that the latter may judge if the penance is proportionate to the fault, the Pope, in virtue of his authority, may confirm, increase or diminish the penalty."<sup>2</sup>

13. The translation of Saints' relics, again, became an occasion of granting fixed indulgences. Such events were looked upon at that time as a ground for universal rejoicing, and the Church felt justified in having special recourse to the servants of God whose remains were being honoured, in order to obtain, through their merits and intercession, a large measure of grace for her needy children.

Matthew Paris tells us, in his *Chronicle*, that in 1247 the masters of the Knights Templars and the Knights Hospitallers sent to England, by the hands of a Templar, a relic of our Lord's Precious Blood. The relic, placed in a crystal depositary, was formally attested by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and by the Bishops, Abbots and nobles of the Holy Land. King Henry III received the present with great joy, and wrote

<sup>1</sup> Amort, Part II, sect. ii, p. 32, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, LIX, n. 24.

to invite all the nobility of England to come and join in the solemn procession of the relic, which was appointed for the day of St Edward's translation, October 13.

On this occasion the King did what his brother-in-law, St Louis of France, had done in honour of the True Cross. On the eve of the feast he fasted on bread and water; and the next day he solemnly bore the relic from St Paul's Cathedral to St Peter's Church at Westminster, to which he presented it.

The Bishop of Norwich celebrated Mass at St Peter's and preached the sermon. He related how this relic had been brought over to England that it might be saved from the outrages of the Mohammedans. He explained—following an apocryphal legend—that, when Joseph of Arimathea had taken the Body of Christ down from the Cross, he gathered up with great care the Blood from our Saviour's wounds and the water that he had used for washing the Sacred Body; and that he had afterwards shared these precious relics with Nicodemus, who had helped him to bury Jesus. This precious deposit, the Bishop added, had been faithfully preserved from father to son, until it had come into the hands of Robert, then occupying the Patriarchal See of Jerusalem, who had given the relic to England. The Prelate concluded by granting, in the name of all the Bishops present, an indulgence of six years and a hundred and forty days (three quarantines) to all who should devoutly honour the precious gift.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Paris, *Chronica*, p. 640. On an indulgence granted by Innocent IV on this occasion for the rebuilding of Westminster church, see Amort, Part I, sect vii, p. 192. As regards the subject of the Crystal Cup containing the relics of the Precious Blood, and the whole "Arthur Legend" of the Holy Grail connected with it, see Migne, *Dictionnaire des Légendes du Christianisme*, under the heading "(Saint) Graal"; Paris, 1855. We have stated elsewhere what we should hold of our Lord's Precious Blood which is preserved as a relic. This Blood either belonged once

In 1283 the relics of St William, Archbishop of York, who had died in 1154, were solemnly translated to the cathedral church of that town. The ceremony was performed by the Metropolitan, assisted by eleven Bishops and surrounded by King Edward, Queen Eleanor and the nobility of England. At the end of it each Bishop present granted an indulgence of forty days to all who, contrite and shriven, should visit the church of York on the first Sunday after Epiphany, in honour of the translation of St William's body.<sup>1</sup> It is added that the Metropolitan ratified the grant.

14. Having discussed indulgences in their relation to Catholic piety, we will now consider them in connexion with the fine arts, and especially with that of architecture. It is no exaggeration to say that we owe to them most of the grand monuments bequeathed to us by the Middle Ages. Those marvels of architecture were more often inspired by the magic power of holy "pardons" than by anything else, both architect and workmen looking upon them as their best reward. Eager for such prizes, they undertook their tasks with courage; and if their ardour appeared to be cooling, the doubling of an indulgence was enough to revive it.

It would be impossible to enumerate here all the wonderful buildings whose construction was brought about, or at least encouraged, by the grant of indulgences from Popes or Bishops. A few instances will suffice.

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to Christ's Body, or it flowed from the consecrated Host or from the image of the Crucifix. Though in no case is it hypostatically united to the Divinity, still it is to be adored as a sign of Christ's true Blood. Cf. *Tract. de Incarnatione*, Part I, p. 277. Paris, 1905.

<sup>1</sup> *Acta SS. Junii*, die 8, t. ii, p. 144, col 2. Similar examples of indulgences may be seen in *Amort*, Part I, sect. v, n. xv, p. 137. Mabillon (*Praef. in saec. v*, Ben.) relates the fact of a concession of forty days' indulgence made by Innocent III to those who should venerate the relics of St Denys in Paris. *Amort*, *l.c.*, sect. vii, p. 191.

Innocent IV, being at Lyons in the fourth year of his pontificate (A.D. 1247), consecrated the high altar of the cathedral church. This building, intended to be as worthy a monument as possible to the greatness of God, was still unfinished from lack of resources. The Pope had already granted an indulgence of forty days to all who should help towards its completion, but the charity of the faithful appeared to be exhausted. Hence Innocent took this opportunity of addressing a letter to the English people recommending them to help towards the completion of the church. To encourage their charity he granted a year's indulgence to all who would contribute towards the work by their alms—*qui eidem fabricae manum porrexerint adjutricem*.<sup>1</sup>

When the Servites had decided to build a church at Florence worthy of the Mother of God, in memory of the miraculous picture of the Annunciation which is believed to be the work of angels, Saint Manetto, prior-general of the Order, went to the Pope and asked him to grant indulgences to those who in any way contributed to the raising of the church. Clement IV favoured the request, and granted, in 1265, twenty days' indulgence to all who, being truly contrite, and having confessed their sins, should help the Servites in their undertaking.<sup>2</sup>

In 1308 a great fire destroyed the Church of St John Lateran and the pontifical palace close by. All was burnt down, excepting the *Sancta Sanctorum* and the wooden altar made in the form of an arch, on which, according to tradition, St Peter had been wont to celebrate the sacred mysteries, and which some courageous men were fortunate enough to rescue from the flames.

<sup>1</sup> Raynaldi, t. ii, a. 1247, n. lxxxv.

<sup>2</sup> Ann. Ord. Serv. B.M.V., t. i, cent. i, l. iii, c. ix. See Soulier, O.S.M., *Storia dei sette Santi Fondatori dell' Ordine dei Servi di Maria*. Rome, 1882, p. 223.



This happened in the pontificate of Clement V, who is well known in history for having transferred the see of Peter from Rome to Avignon, and for having abolished the Order of Templars. Clement immediately planned the rebuilding of the Basilica, and set apart considerable sums for the purpose. All the faithful, without distinction of sex, rank or state of life, took part in the work; and, to encourage them, the Pope granted indulgences.<sup>1</sup>

Among all countries England is remarkable for the grand cathedrals and majestic abbeys which are the admiration alike of her own people and of foreigners, of Christians and of unbelievers. If, however, the Prelates of the Church had not, by being lavish with indulgences, induced both rich and poor to contribute according to their means to the raising of these magnificent piles, England would undoubtedly have lacked many splendid buildings which, even though now wrested from the use for which they were destined, stand as eloquent witnesses to the faith that inspired their construction.

Finally we may quote, in connexion with the development of the practice of pardons, the custom then originating and which was soon to expand, of granting indulgences for the performance of various works of mercy. Thus there were indulgences granted for feeding the poor,<sup>2</sup> for carrying their bodies to the grave,<sup>3</sup> for ransoming the Christians from the Mussulman captivity,<sup>4</sup> for preaching and hearing the word of God,<sup>5</sup> for marrying prostitutes to the end that these wretched creatures might cease their scandalous lives,<sup>6</sup> and,

<sup>1</sup> See Giovanni Villani, *Chronic.* VIII, 97.

<sup>2</sup> Harduin, viii, 944.

<sup>3</sup> Gousset, *Actes*, etc., II, 753, 754.

<sup>4</sup> Hergenröther. *Regest. Leonis X*, n. 3471, and passim.

<sup>5</sup> Amort, Part I, sect. vii, pp. 192, 193.

<sup>6</sup> Raynaldi, ad a. 1198, n. 38. Amort, Part I, sect vii, p. 190.

finally, for the encouragement of literature and science. Nothing shows so forcefully the encouragement of learning on the part of the Church as the numerous examples of indulgences granted to charitable works instituted to assist poor students in their literary achievements. A good example is the concession made by Gregory XII (1406-1415) in favour of the University of Siena.<sup>1</sup> This is a sufficient answer to the common accusation that the Church encourages ignorance, and prefers to keep her children unaware of the progress of the sciences and of learning in general. Thus it was that the new discipline as to dispensing indulgences grew and developed in the Church.

15. To complete our study of the development of indulgences we shall now have to treat of two most important events belonging to this period, which gave a powerful impetus to the ancient practice and a solemn authoritative sanction to the new form of bestowing indulgences—*i.e.*, the Crusades and the institution of Jubilees. But the subject is of such importance that two separate chapters must be devoted to it.

Before, however, entering upon this fresh matter, it may be well to observe that the disciplinary practice regarding indulgences that now prevails in the Church is the natural result of the development that we have here been following, which development was due to mediæval faith, and was directed by the watchful care of the Church. There was no innovation, properly so-called; only a more exact systematising of what had existed from the beginning. On the one hand, canonical penances were rapidly declining, and the Church, fully conscious of her children's weakness, could only tolerate the decadent state of penitential discipline. On the other hand, the lamentations of those who,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Denifle, *Die Universitäten des Mittelalters*, p. 451. Berlin, 1885.

like the Jansenists of old,<sup>1</sup> are incessantly deploring the abolition of ancient penances, are known to be inspired by fanaticism and exaggeration, rather than by sincere zeal.<sup>2</sup> So the Church, in her maternal anxiety, could make up for the penance that had fallen out of use, by a regular and more abundant distribution of the spiritual riches that she carefully guarded.

Moreover, the Church, like all other institutions, had to pass from childhood to manhood, and from the deeds of youth to those of maturity. If so, who that remembers the promise of her divine Spouse to be with her "all days, even to the end of the world,"<sup>3</sup> would dare to accuse her of being deceived, or of deceiving the faithful, in acting with greater liberality now than in former times?

16. If one would gain an exact idea of the Church's attitude towards indulgences and the new forms of conceding them at the period we are examining, the surest way is not only to consider the decrees of her governing pastors, but to learn what were the feelings of her children who make up the mystical body of Christ, and whose spiritual instincts are inspired by the Holy Ghost. Let us see, then, what was the ordinary pious practice of the faithful in this matter, a practice to which, in later years, Henry VIII, whilst still a son of the Church, appealed, in answer to Luther's violent denunciation of indulgences.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fleury, *Discours sur l'Hist. Ecclés. depuis l'année DC jusqu'à l'année MCX*, n. 16.

<sup>2</sup> These complaints were renewed by the pseudo-Council of Pistoja, whose lamentations found an echo in the *Trattato storico-dogmatico-critico delle Indulgenze*, already referred to, Part I, chap. i, n. 11, and Part II, chap. iii, n. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxviii 20.

<sup>4</sup> "Ego iudicio et observatae sanctorum consuetudini non dubito potius acquiescendum quam Luthero soli, qui totam Ecclesiam tam furiose contemnit."—*Assertio*, etc., in the article "De Indulgentiis."

Now we do not find that any one, during these centuries, opposed indulgences or the mode of granting them. The revolt of Wycliff and the Hussites had not yet risen to trouble the peace of the Church; Erasmus had not yet scandalised the ears of the faithful by his inconsiderate and irreverent descriptions of holy things; and Luther's revolt—opening the way to the negation of every divine and human truth—was still to come.

All Christians of the time were alike animated—each one according to his own capacity—by holy zeal for acquiring the spiritual treasures offered to them. They went to the Holy Places to rescue them from the heathens; they contributed by their offerings to the building of churches; they went on pilgrimages to the tombs of the saints; they offered themselves as hostages for the redemption of captives, and they ventured over unknown seas to preach the Gospel of Christ—all with this one motive, to gain for themselves the holy pardons offered them by the lavish generosity of the Church.

And if we turn to the servants of God specially renowned for sanctity during the same period, we shall find them as eager as the general body of Christians to gain indulgences.

17. St Clare of Assisi, whose gentle figure will always stand out as the type of virginal innocence joined to austere penance, being at the point of death (A.D. 1253), begged of Pope Innocent IV—then passing through Assisi—a plenary indulgence for the sins of her whole life with the apostolic blessing, and she received both.

Turning from the Franciscan cell to a royal palace, we find St Louis, king of France,<sup>1</sup> inserting into his will the following piece of fatherly advice to his son and

<sup>1</sup> He reigned from 1226 to 1270, and was canonised in 1297 by Boniface VIII.

heir, Philip III, le Hardi: "Be eager to gain for thy own profit the indulgences of our holy Mother the Church."<sup>1</sup>

The holy king had practised what he taught. His faithful companion and chronicler, Joinville, tells us how, during his stay in Palestine, Louis carried on his own shoulders loads of rubble and mortar, intended for the restoration of the citadels of Jaffa and Sidon, in order to gain the indulgences granted for that work,<sup>2</sup> such value did he attach to these spiritual favours.

But it is not only amongst the more ardent races of Central and Southern Europe that we find such decisive testimony in favour of the doctrine and practice of indulgences. It is the same thing when we come to the colder-blooded people of the North.

Rather more than two centuries before Luther's public and sweeping denial of the dogma in question, and, strangely enough, in his own province and in the very town that gave him birth, at Eisleben, in the county of Mansfeld in Upper Saxony, there came into the world two children, whose angelic purity, austerity of life and steadfast attachment to Catholic tradition were destined to be a kind of prophetic protest against the unbridled licence and violent revolt of the future Reformer. These two virgins, St Gertrude and St Mechtilde—sisters by blood as well as in mind—of illustrious birth, and still more illustrious for the heavenly favours granted to them, bear historical witness to the practice of indulgences, to the communication of merits by the faithful to one another, and to the usefulness of prayer for the dead.

The life of St Gertrude (d. 1334), especially, gives us numerous instances to the point; but three of these will be enough to quote here:

<sup>1</sup> Raynaldi, A.D. 1270, n. xv.

<sup>2</sup> Raynaldi, A.D. 1251, n. liii.



“ One day, when the saint was listening to a sermon, and heard an indulgence of several years announced, such as is granted in return for alms, she said most fervently to her divine Master: ‘ O good Jesus ! if I possessed great riches, how willingly would I give much gold and silver to gain the absolution of my sins by this indulgence, for the glory and honour of thy most holy name ! ’ Our Lord replied to her: ‘ Receive, then, by my authority, full remission of all thy sins and negligences.’ And immediately she saw her own soul without the slightest spot, shining with marvellous whiteness.”<sup>1</sup>

Another time, as she was assisting at Mass with all the fervour of which she was capable, she merited to receive from God, by the merits of Jesus Christ, a threefold blessing, and together with it a threefold remission or indulgence of all the sins of which she had been guilty before the divine Majesty, in thoughts, words and deed.<sup>2</sup>

On the suffrages by which we may help the souls in purgatory our Lord spoke to her in the following terms: “ When, through charity, anything is offered me for the souls of the faithful departed, as my own goodness makes me always pity and forgive, and as I know that those souls can do no more for themselves, I think on their misery with compassion, and what is offered to me on their account I make over to them by way of absolution or alleviation, or even of increase of eternal bliss, according to their respective state and merit. When these same things are offered me for the

<sup>1</sup> See *Vita e Revelazionii di S. Gertrude*, by F. Lanspergius, translated by Fr. Clement Poggiali, O.S.M., Florence, 1886, p. 118. An indulgence, as we have said, does not take away the stain, but only the penalty, of sin. Nevertheless, our Lord himself, in the fullness of his mercy, might very well grant to the saint an indulgence *a culpa et a poena* in the fullest sense of the term.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 151.

living, I certainly hold them in keeping for the salvation of those they pray for. But as, whilst on earth, men can work their own justification and help to ensure their salvation by their own good deeds, holy desires and right will, it is befitting that they should try to merit for themselves the benefits which they hope to obtain by the merits of others.”<sup>1</sup> On another occasion, on the second Sunday after the Epiphany, she prepared to make a spiritual pilgrimage, following the custom of the faithful who go to Rome to see the “Holy Face”; she made an examination of conscience and recalled her sins to mind, and placed herself at the feet of Christ, asking him to remit her sins. Jesus raising his hand blessed her, saying: “I grant you in my divine mercy the indulgence and remission of all your sins. As reparation perform this satisfaction which I impose upon you: perform every day during this present year some good action, uniting it to that mercy by which I have pardoned your offences.”<sup>2</sup>

Besides St Gertrude, St Bridget of Sweden (1302-1373) has left us a valuable testimony to her lively faith in “holy pardons.” This woman was one of the most remarkable figures of the period—a perfect type of chastity in widowhood and a model of devotion to the Church. Whilst carefully educating her own children, she found time to erect monasteries, to send mes-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 218. What is here said of an increase of eternal bliss, following in the departed souls on the suffrages made for them, should not be understood of the essential bliss consisting in the vision of God, but only of an increase of accidental or secondary joy originating in the vision of the works of charity done for them by the faithful, for every display of charity is a source of fresh joy for God’s friends. As our prayers for the dead cannot change their essential state, so they cannot augment the quantity of their essential bliss: all they can do is to alleviate their sufferings in purgatory and, as a consequence, to augment their accidental joy by the exhibition of charitable acts done on their behalf.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 286, 287.

sages to the Vicar of Christ, and to carry on a practice of deep contemplation and familiar intercourse with God. Her life affords us more than one proof of the lawfulness and value of indulgences. In her Revelations, which were discussed and defended at the Councils of Basle and of Constance, she has left very important evidence on this point.

When she had built the Convent of our Lady at Wadstena, in the province of Linköping in Sweden, Bridget asked our Lord to attach the same indulgences to it that belonged to the church of St Peter's Chains in Rome, and Christ was pleased to grant her request.<sup>1</sup>

She had been living for two years in this convent, when our Lord ordered her to undertake a pilgrimage to Rome with the object of there enriching herself with the treasure of indulgences. "Go to Rome," he said; "the squares there are paved with gold and reddened with the blood of the Saints. The indulgences which the holy Pontiffs have merited by their prayers, and which may be gained in Rome, are a shorter way of getting to heaven."<sup>2</sup> Bridget obeyed the divine command and went to Rome, where history shows her going from church to church to gain indulgences and to venerate the Saints' relics and the Martyrs' tombs.

It was then that Jesus Christ deigned to instruct her on the value of holy pardons. "The indulgences of the Roman churches," he one day said to her, "are greater before God than is generally supposed, because those who gain them with a perfectly disposed heart will obtain, not only the remission of their sins, but eternal glory. For these indulgences spare them a great and severe penalty; a very long satisfaction is changed into a very short one; and those who leave

<sup>1</sup> *Revel.* Lib. IV, chap. cxxxvii, edit. Consalv. Durant., Romae, 1628.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Birgerus archiep. Upsalensis in Vita S. Birgittae cap. iii, n. 24, ap. Bolland., t. iv, Octob. p. 491.

this city enriched by indulgences, with perfect charity and true contrition, are delivered both from their sins and from the punishment due to their faults.”<sup>1</sup>

From Rome the saint went to Assisi, where she obtained a miraculous assurance from our Lord of the authenticity of the Portiuncula indulgence, which had been denied by some people and about which she had felt some doubt.<sup>2</sup>

Years did not diminish St Bridget's eagerness for pardons. When she was seventy, she went to the Holy Land with her daughter, St Catherine. On her first visit to the holy Sepulchre it was revealed to her that she and her companions were as completely purified from their sins as though just baptised, whilst by their devotion several of them had delivered their parents' souls from purgatory. She was also told that all who visit that holy place with the firm purpose of amending their lives, receive full remission of their faults and the grace of advancing in virtue.<sup>3</sup>

18. It is not only among the laity, but also, nay especially, among the ministers of the sanctuary and the pastors of the Christian flock, that this esteem for indulgences, with a desire of gaining them, is found. We have a noted example of this in St John Cantius, so named from his birthplace Kenty, in the diocese of Cracow. While professor and doctor of theology in the University of Cracow, where he had first been a student, he contrived to unite works of apostolic zeal with his teaching labours. Not content with this, he went to Jerusalem to satisfy his devotion to our Lord's Passion. He even went to preach the love of the Crucified to the Turks. Then he betook himself four times to Rome on foot, carrying his pilgrim's

<sup>1</sup> *Revel.* Book IV, cap. ciii.

<sup>2</sup> *Acta SS.*, t. iv, Octob., p. 438, B.

<sup>3</sup> *Revel.* Book VIII, chap. xiv.

knapsack on his shoulders, to venerate the tombs of the apostles, and, as he said, to redeem the penalties of purgatory that his sins had incurred, by the abundant indulgences daily to be gained in Rome.

The celebrated reformer Girolamo Savonarola, who preached so freely against the abuses of his time, showed also a singular esteem for indulgences. On the eve of Ascension Day, May 23, 1498, he went to confession, received holy Viaticum, made an act of faith in the Real Presence, and with great humility received the plenary indulgence granted to him by the Vicar of Christ.

Such examples might be indefinitely multiplied; but the above are enough to prove the general confidence of both clergy and laity in the use of "pardons."

19. Before closing this chapter it may be well to give a rapid glance at the attitude displayed by the Eastern nations, as time went on, towards indulgences. Such a short survey will better enable us to trace, in the next chapter, the efforts of the Western Church to get back the holy places and to gather her wandering sheep into the one fold of Christ.

The practice of the Eastern Church with regard to penance, with its manifold development and with its dispensations or remissions authorised by the holy canons, has been already described. This discipline was maintained on the whole until the unfortunate period when the manœuvres of Photius, and still later of Michael Cerularius, withdrew Eastern discipline from the beneficent influence of Rome. From that epoch we must date the sterility with which that Church seems to have been smitten. Inaccessible henceforward to the progress of faith, she has moved only round the narrow circle within which she shut herself up at the time of the schism. Hence it is superfluous to look for any development in the practice of



indulgences like that which has gone on in the West from the eighth century to our own day.<sup>1</sup>

However, we need not doubt of the belief professed by Oriental Christians before the schism as to the power of the Bishops in delivering penitents from the punishment due to their sins. This is seen in the consequence of Pope John VIII's action towards the notorious Photius himself.

After the death of the lawful Patriarch, St Ignatius, Photius, with the consent of the Emperor Basil, had again occupied the see of Constantinople. He sent a deputation to the Pope, begging for the ratification of his appointment. He represented that his return to that bishopric had taken place by the desire of the other Patriarchs and Bishops, with the object of promoting the reunion of the Churches. He added that it would be the means of effectually helping Western effort against Saracen incursions, and promised to give back Bulgaria to the Patriarch of the West.

The Pope consented, and, in order to heal all breaches, gave absolution from all ecclesiastical censures to Photius and to all Bishops, priests, clerics and laymen who lay under them. He declared that he acted thus in virtue of the power acknowledged by the whole Church as residing in him, which power had been conferred upon him by Jesus Christ in the person of St Peter, and extended without exception to everything.<sup>2</sup>

We need not repeat here how unworthy Photius was of this pardon; his acts have proved it only too well. It will be enough now to draw attention to the clear

<sup>1</sup> As is well known, modern Greek theologians accuse the Church of Rome of having introduced the dogma of indulgences among other innovations (καινοτομοίαι, νεωτερισμοί). See the Encycl. letter of the patriarch Anthymos, in *Chrysostomos*, Part II, p. 298. See Ambrazés, *ἡ ὁρθόδοξος ἐκκλησία*, I, p. 55. See also A. Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, 1907, p. 389.

<sup>2</sup> Fleury, *Hist. Eccl.*, B. LIII, n. 7.

proof afforded by this incident of the recognition, by both Churches, of the power vested in the Sovereign Pontiff for the remission of penalties due to sins, peculiarly such as are ecclesiastical censures, through the authority of the keys.

However this may be, the Orientals were far from rejecting belief in the help afforded to souls in Purgatory by the good works of the living. A "profession of faith" accepted by the Ethiopians may be cited in testimony of this. Its terms, given by Damian Goes, are as follows:

"We believe that, on Saturdays and Sundays, the souls of pious Christians suffer no torments, God granting them rest on those holy days, until the final term of the pains due to their sins arrives and the souls are fully delivered. We believe that for the relief of these pains and the shortening of their duration these suffering souls are greatly helped by alms given for their benefit.<sup>1</sup> The Patriarch does not grant indulgences for those souls; their deliverance belongs only to God, according to the measure fixed beforehand of the length of their penalty. Neither does the Patriarch grant days of indulgence."<sup>2</sup>

From this, however, we are not to conclude that the Ethiopians do not admit the Pope's power of granting indulgences. In his *Historia Aethiopica*,<sup>3</sup> Job Lendolfo relates that a Bishop was sent from Rome, as coadjutor to the Patriarch, to carry the Bull for the Jubilee of 1625, which was specially extended to the Ethiopians, and that many among them, surprised by the novelty of the thing, and unacquainted with the real nature of the treasures of the Church, wondered

<sup>1</sup> We have here a plain proof of the Orientals' belief in the Communion of Saints.

<sup>2</sup> In *Collect. Histor. Hisp.*, t. ii, De Fide et Morib. Aethiopum, in Amort, *op. cit.*, Part II, sect. i, p. 14, n. xxi.

<sup>3</sup> Lib. III, c. xi, n. 69, ap. Amort, *l.c.*

and repeated the saying of the Pharisees: "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?"<sup>1</sup> But the king severely reproved the critics, and said that the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given to Peter, and that in virtue of them Peter and his successors have the power of granting indulgences.

But, however it may have been with this belief, Gregory XIII (d. 1585) had already imposed on the Greeks Pius IV's Profession of Faith, which prescribes acknowledgement of the power bequeathed by Christ to his Church of granting indulgences, and the special usefulness of the practice as regards the Christian people.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke vii 49.

<sup>2</sup> "Indulgentiarum potestatem a Christo in Ecclesia relictam esse, illarumque usum christiano populo maxime salutarem esse affirmo."—See Amort, *op. cit.*, Part II, sect. ii, p. 43, n. xxviii. Denzinger, 1083.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CRUSADES

#### *The Eleventh and Following Centuries*

“Take this holy sword, a gift from God, wherewith thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of my people Israel.”—*2 Mac.* xv 16.

The works of man and the works of God—The Church a work of God—The Eastern Christians—Anxieties of the Popes on their account—Urban II and the first crusade—Peter the Hermit—Indulgences for the crusade—The second crusade and St Bernard—The crusade of Saragossa—Origin of the Bull of the crusade—Other crusades—Eagerness of Christians for the crusade—St Francis and St Bernardine of Siena at the crusade—Gradual decline of canonical penances—The Blessed Berthold—Penitential of Robert of Flammesburg.

**B**ETWEEN the works of God and those of man, there is, among other differences, this marked one, that man cannot impart the vital principle to any work of his hands. He cannot produce a living being. He can at best imitate the external appearance of animated creatures, copy their form and colour. The work of his hands can never be more than an inert mass which, from the moment of its completion, begins insensibly to deteriorate until it perishes altogether. There is nothing strange in this, seeing that the power of man is necessarily limited; all his works, therefore, must bear the mark of progressive decay, of mortality and of destruction.

Not so with the works of God. He is essential life, and life was in him from the beginning. According to St Augustine's, St Cyprian's and some

other Fathers' reading of the third verse of St John's first chapter, "All things that were made were *life in Him*."<sup>1</sup> That is to say, all created things, before their creation, that is from all eternity, had their being in the divine mind, where they were not only "full of life," but the very life of God.<sup>2</sup> Then, when the appointed moment came, all creatures came forth from his hands as he had decreed, and to the noblest of them—*i.e.*, to those who had received an internal principle of life—the divine blessing was given as a pledge of lasting productiveness, "Increase and multiply!"<sup>3</sup>

If, then, the Church is a merely human institution, we must make up our minds that she will gradually decline from her first beauty and grandeur, like the ancient monuments which no care of man can prevent from falling into decay. We shall have to admit that she reached the summit of her perfection in the time of Christ and of the apostles, and that after them she began to decrease in greatness, and is destined to degenerate gradually as time goes on, until she will at last fall into dust and disappear from the face of the earth.

2. But the Church is not the work of man. She is the work of God, indeed the noblest of all the works in the spiritual order that have ever come forth from his hands. Hence she must not only bear the impress of the divine life on her, but she must have her whole internal organisation animated thereby. Throughout her veins there must circulate the precious Blood of her crucified Founder, flowing in a vigorous current that is daily being renewed by his immolation in the sacrifice of the altar.

<sup>1</sup> ὁ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ᾗν.

<sup>2</sup> See St Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, I, q. xviii, a. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. i 28.



But if the Church is a divine institution, living a supernatural and immortal life, she must, like all other living creatures, have her natural growth, continual progress and normal development, and this growth and development must become in her the source of new and more vigorous operations of a more widely extended character, just as the actions of a full-grown man exceed in number and strength those of a little child.

That the Church is a body capable of such development, by virtue of the living principle abiding within her heart, follows from the very words of our Lord. She is that kingdom of heaven which, like to a grain of mustard seed, a man took and sowed in his field. This, the least indeed of all the seeds, becomes, when it is developed, "greater than all herbs, growing into a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof."<sup>1</sup>

Consequently it cannot be a matter of surprise that the Church should have increased her operations and enlarged her institutions, and that, in the course of centuries, the triumphant chant in the Basilicas should have succeeded to the wailing in the dark Catacombs; that after being wrapped in swaddling-clothes she should have entered on a giant's career; that after taking refuge underground she should have appeared in the full light of day, surrounded by "all the glory of the king's daughter, clothed round about with varieties."<sup>2</sup>

In proportion as her strength increased, it was natural that the Church should develop and confirm her teaching, settle her liturgy, regulate her discipline, in short turn her authority to account by a more extended and spontaneous use of the power bestowed on her by Christ. And this is exactly what has taken place.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii 31, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xliv 14.

In accordance with such a principle of development it is not to be wondered at that the Church enlarged the field of her previous practice in the matter of indulgences, and that she became more prodigal towards her children as regards the sacred treasures confided to her care. Just as she condemned new errors and formulated in her councils new dogmatic definitions, as she erected new episcopal sees and fixed the rights of Bishops, as she acquired territory of her own and gave birth to a fresh temporal power, as she mitigated the ancient penances, let them fall into disuse and established others, even so she granted pardons or indulgences under a new form and with new liberality, thus making it easier for the faithful to make satisfaction for the penalties due to sin, and softening the rigour of their penance without lessening its value.

The history of the crusades, which we are now to consider, brings out this process of development very clearly. It shows that if the Church had been hitherto parsimonious in applying the satisfactions of Christ and of the Saints, she began, with the crusading period, to distribute them with a freedom that soon became generosity. If until then she had exacted long and severe penances before admitting the sinner to communion, if she had rarely, and only partially, relaxed the penances imposed, we shall now find her satisfied with a prayer, an alms, a visit to a sanctuary, or enrolment in one of the Christian armies bound for the Holy Land, liberally remitting in Christ's name the remainder of the penance to be performed.

Undoubtedly the Church had possessed the power of thus acting from the moment of her institution; but the right time for using that power had not come until now. He who watches over the growth of the small herb in creation, and who appoints the moment for its flowering and for the bringing forth of fruit, had

decreed that the crusades should be the point of departure for the new era, an era of grace and mercy towards man, in which the Church was to dispense in profusion the accumulated satisfactions of Christ and of his Saints for the benefit of sinful humanity.

3. During the second half of the eleventh century the Western Church was anxiously watching her sister of the East. In her gaze there was more than a sister's affection, there was the loving solicitude of a mother, the very pains and throes of childbirth. The Holy Land had fallen into the hands of the sworn enemies of Christ; its sacred places had become tributary to the crescent. Many of the churches raised in memory of the Saviour's life and death, even that of the Holy Sepulchre, had been turned into heathen temples where unspeakably abominable rites were daily being performed; whilst others were being used as stables for horses and other vile purposes.

The members of Christ's Church were no better treated than the buildings; for had not the Moslem sworn war to the knife against the faithful? Hence the Christians of the Holy Land were subjected to a frightful tyranny, oppressed with taxes, put beyond the pale of law, crushed down and insulted in every possible manner. Their children were taken and made into apostates, and if they resisted, they were put to death. Priests and deacons were strangled in the sanctuary, and consecrated virgins were no longer safe even within the cloister.

Accounts of this persecution were incessantly carried from East to West—from Jerusalem to Rome, from Bethlehem and Nazareth to Milan and Lyons. The numerous pilgrims who returned from their journeys of "redemption" described to their fellow-countrymen in moving accents what they themselves had had to suffer, as well as the yet greater evils that

weighed down the Christians living in Palestine. A thrill of indignation went through the whole Western Church and roused a burning desire to avenge their brethren's wrongs by punishing the oppressors.

4. The Popes could not remain indifferent in face of this universal cry of distress. They knew the evil and resented it, even as fathers resent the sufferings of their children; and they ardently longed to save their sons of the East from such a state of wretched slavery.

At the time when the Church was about to reach the second millennium of her existence, she was being governed by a Pope who joined a consummate knowledge of philosophy and mathematics to his fatherly care for the well-being of Christianity. Sylvester II (A.D. 1003), better known by his former name of Gerbert, had been the tutor of kings and emperors and represented the most advanced learning of his time. He was moved by deep compassion for the cruel sufferings of the Oriental Christians.

The Western Church was just then a prey to religious wars and civil discord. Yet Sylvester did not hesitate to send forth an encyclical urging both princes and people to rise as one man and to fight for the deliverance of their Eastern brethren from the Moslem tyranny. But the West at that time was too selfish to attend practically to his words, and there was granted to Sylvester II merely the glory of having first put solemnly the claims of the Holy Land before the world.

Three-quarters of a century went by before the celebrated Hildebrand (Gregory VII) put forth his unrivalled strength of character in an effort to revive the dying spark that Sylvester had kindled. In 1074, putting aside his own difference with Henry IV of Germany, he wrote him an urgent letter on the miserable state of the Oriental Christians, begging him to do

his utmost to rouse the princes of Europe (to whom he had also sent letters) to action in the cause, and adding that he would gladly fight for it himself.

But Hildebrand, though he rekindled right feeling on the subject, and roused much sympathy, also failed in actually starting a crusade. It took the faithful of the West another twenty-one years to reach that pitch of enthusiasm which should break forth into united action.

5. The favourable moment for making this smouldering condition of sympathetic feeling burst into a blaze came at last, and the honour of bringing about the first crusade belongs to yet another successor of Peter, Blessed Urban II.

It is not part of our subject to discuss these expeditions at length, though we might find much to say in their defence against the many calumnies of which they have been the object. Many writers are apt to judge them only by their immediate results, and to see nothing in them but an outburst of temporary fanaticism leading to unbridled licence—a mode of judging which is on a par with a criticism of a grand building based on the observation of a few defective details.

Putting aside here the question of results and of the defects inseparable from all human undertakings, we ourselves cannot fail to acknowledge, both in the motives that inspired such great masses of people and in the disinterestedness shown by so many men of rank, who sacrificed hearth and home for the cause, the presence of those generous feelings and of that lively faith which are the most beautiful characteristics of the Middle Ages.

In any case the crusades, certainly looked upon by the people as being the will of God, must be ranked among events specially appointed by divine Providence



for enabling the Church to assert her vitality, to reach a fresh stage of growth and to extend her discipline over a wider area.

6. Peter the Hermit was the man chosen by the Holy Spirit to promote the great work. In the course of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem he had heard burning words from the Patriarch of that city, Simeon, imploring help from the West. Tradition has it that our divine Lord himself spoke to him whilst he prayed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. "Arise, Peter," he is believed to have said, "and hasten to preach the crusade, for I will be with thee."

Peter then went to Clermont, where a Council of thirty-nine Bishops, presided over by Urban II (A.D. 1095), was assembled. He explained his mission to the Pope, received the papal blessing on it, and began to preach the crusade. He addressed his very first sermon to the Council itself, and his zeal roused wonderful enthusiasm among its members. The Pope was extraordinarily moved by his words. He rose up in the midst of the assembly, uttered an earnest allocution to the large number of clergy and nobility there present, and behold, they all cried out with one voice in the old Provençal tongue, "Deus lo volt!"<sup>1</sup>

To reward the exertions inseparable from this undertaking the Pope drew upon the spiritual treasure of the Church. He declared in the Council that he would remit to all who should take arms against the infidel the penalty due for their sins; and to those who

<sup>1</sup> "It is God's Will." The registers of several Popes who preceded Innocent III, and especially those of Urban II, are lost. Hence we have no first-hand information as to the acts of this Council, which fact explains the differences among historians, not as to the principal fact, but as to some details. There is an interesting passage in the account given by Robert, abbot of St Remigius, in his treaty, *De Expeditione Hierosolymitana, per Francos feliciter confecta*. It may be found in the Ottoboni MSS., cat. 8, of the Vatican Library.

would die in battle he promised the pardon of their sins and eternal life.

This decision was formulated in the second canon of the Council, in the following terms: "Whosoever, from pure devotion and not for the sake of obtaining glory or money, shall set out to deliver the Church of God at Jerusalem shall count this journey in the place of all penance."<sup>1</sup>

The effect of this promise upon the assembly is well known. All there present, standing up, declared that the crusade was the work of God, and swore to take the cross. The electric current, if we may so call it, starting from this Council passed through France, Germany and Italy. The proud knight and the humble peasant, the valiant soldier and the pious hermit, all classes, in short, united to form a powerful army, with the sole end of delivering the holy places, and they started in the hope of no other reward than that of gaining remission of the penalties they had incurred for their sins.

It was a marvellous thing to see thousands of men putting the sign of salvation on their breasts, quitting friends and country, and undertaking a long and dangerous journey, with no inducement but the expiation of their sins, no pay but the promise of an indulgence.

7. Nothing in the course of the world's history so clearly reveals the action of the Holy Ghost as the unanimous movement of a great multitude towards some particular object. It belongs to God, and to God alone, to move the human will with equal force and persuasiveness. For, on the one hand, God never compels man; on the other, "none can resist his will."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Conc. Clermont., Mansi, *Sacr. conc. nov. et ampl. collect. Ven.*, 1775, t. xx, p. 816.

<sup>2</sup> *Esth.* xiii 9.

In the unfathomable depths of his power he holds the secret of "turning the heart of the king whithersoever he willeth."<sup>1</sup> He moves crowds as easily as individuals, and makes them carry out his designs as one man. It is not without reason that he is called "the Lord of Hosts";<sup>2</sup> and we read in the Psalm: "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of Majesty hath thundered, the Lord upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is in power; the voice of the Lord in magnificence."<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the world "the spirit of God moved over the waters,"<sup>4</sup> imparting the designed form to chaos and peopling the earth with innumerable beings, and it has been the same throughout the course of the ages. His breath carries away whole nations by an instinctive impulse, and irresistibly draws them, though safeguarding their liberty, to accomplish his designs. In this way those great events come about that fix the destiny of the world and especially of the Church.

As we have said before, speaking of other occasions which gave rise to new concessions of pardons, we cannot deny the divine inspiration to the Church in this new method of granting indulgences to the faithful who went to the Holy Land. To do this would be to admit the whole body of Christ, pastors and people alike, to have been in error.

We hear of no protests against the grant, of no exception taken to its form, of no fear lest its prodigality should become scandal or give cause for relaxation. True, as time went on, there were some who made use of the crusades for personal and even criminal objects; but it was not for such that the indulgence was given,

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxi 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxviii 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. xi 22.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. i 2.

and their evil deeds could not corrupt what was good in itself.<sup>1</sup>

In fact this total remission of canonical penance and consequently of all penalty due to the Justice of God for sin, was merely the putting into practice of a right that had always belonged to the Church. It was no real innovation. The form of grant alone was modified, just as it had been changed in certain ways before, whether when times of peace succeeded persecutions or during the centuries following. The concession was more ample than previous ones, for hitherto the Church had but rarely granted full remission to penitents. Now the crusaders had the whole penalty remitted for whatever sins they had been guilty of up to the moment of their departure for the Holy Land. They were moreover promised, in case of death, remission of penalty for what further sins they might have committed and eternal life, always, of course, supposing that they died in the grace of God.

A want of sufficient motive can certainly not be alleged against this indulgence. A work of supreme importance was in question and one which tended directly to the honour and glory of God and the good of the Church. It was a difficult work, moreover, to accomplish and one that demanded great sacrifice. Hence, the Church would fain act more generously than ever in her application of Christ's satisfactions to those who took the cross. And as the proud minds

<sup>1</sup> On the subject of Crusade indulgences the reader may consult Adolf Gottlob, *Kreuzablass und Almosenablass. Eine Studie über die Frühzeit des Ablasswesens*, Stuttgart, 1906. Of this work, which evidently bears the marks of party spirit, Dr. Nik. Paulus wrote: "Ich bedaure sehr, offen aussprechen zu müssen dass die so reichhaltige Arbeit des Verfassers in der ganzen Behandlung und Beurteilung des Themas nur zu oft zum schärfsten Widerspruch herausfordert." "Aus der Frühzeit des Ablasswesens," in *Literarische Beilage der Kölnischen Volkszeitung*, 6 Sept., 1906.

and unsubdued hearts of the northern races did not understand submitting to the course of tears, fasts and prostrations prescribed by the sacred canons, the Church counted as sufficient compensation for them the energy and courage expended in the cause of Christ. Thus it came to pass that full remission was granted to the crusaders in consideration of what they had done already and in the hope that they would achieve yet more.<sup>1</sup>

Who, in this case, would dare to accuse the Church of making a mistake or of squandering the merit acquired by our Lord? If there was ever sufficient reason for applying it profusely, here surely was one. If ever there was a favourable soil for receiving such favours, it was surely the hearts of these crusading knights who, if they had sinned, yet held the sacrifice of their lives for nothing if only their Saviour's tomb might be delivered.<sup>2</sup>

8. St Bernard was the preacher of the second crusade (A.D. 1146), for which Pope Eugenius III had granted the indulgence to all who should take part in it, "(ut) omnium de quibus corde contrito confessionem fecissent, indulgentiam obtinerent." The eloquent Abbot of Clairvaux has left us, in several of his letters, a genuine expression of his views on indulgences. In his letter to the Bishop, clergy and people of Spier in Bavaria<sup>3</sup> he earnestly exhorts them to join the

<sup>1</sup> Synodalis Concio Urbani II, Mansi, *op. cit.*, p. 821.

<sup>2</sup> Here are the words of St Bernard, plainly showing that the greater number of crusaders had need of pardon and indulgence: "Paucos admodum in tanta multitudine hominum illo confluere videas, nisi utique sceleratos et impios, raptores et sacrilegos homicidas, perjuros, adulteros, de quorum protectione duplicatur gaudium; quandoquidem de suo discessu tam suos laetificant, quam illos de adventu, quibus subvenire festinant."—Serm. exhort. ad milit. templi.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. 322 of the Paris edition, 363 of the Venice edition of 1750. According to the latter edition of St Bernard's works,



crusaders, and, as an incentive, reminds them of the indulgence promised, which he describes as *largissima*.

He comments on St Paul's saying to the Corinthians: "Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation,"<sup>1</sup> and says to them: "Listen! the Lord your God is putting you to the test. His eyes are on the children of men to see if any among them can understand, reflect and mourn over their own condition. For the Lord has pity on his people, and to them who have gravely sinned he offers a wholesome remedy.

"Sinners, despair not! the Lord is good. Had he meant to punish you, not only would he have refrained from asking your services, but he would not have accepted them even when offered.

"Consider, I repeat, the treasures of God's bounty; watch his merciful devices. He becomes needy, or at least lets himself appear so, and desires nothing but to come to your help. He would fain be looked upon as your debtor, that he may be able to reward those who fight for him by granting them remission of their sins and eternal glory. Blessed, then, is the generation that can profit by this fruitful season of indulgences and that has the happiness of living in this year filled with the peace of God, which is a true jubilee, because the blessing flows over the whole world, and all men hasten with devout rivalry towards the sign of life.

"Here, O brave soldier, O valiant knight, is a happy chance of fighting without danger; for, in this war, to conquer is glory and to die is gain. If any man among you is a wise trafficker in the goods of this

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published by Horstius and Mabillon, the letter is addressed "to the clergy and people of Eastern France." Cf. Mabillon, *Praef. in saec. V*, Bened. n. 109. See also Amort, *op. cit.*, Part II, sect. ii, n. ix, p. 58.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vi 2.

world, let him well consider the value of the goods here offered for his purchase, let him take heed lest he should let them go. Take the sign of the cross, and so you will obtain indulgence for all the faults that you have confessed with a contrite heart.”<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, we have one of the Doctors of the Church warmly recommending the indulgences granted by the Popes to the Crusaders. Like St Cyprian, and, later on, like the Fathers of the Council of Trent, he urges the necessity of true contrition and humble confession as conditions for gaining them. For, as we have said before, nobody can obtain the remission of penalty due to sins, unless he begins by repenting of them and, like those who believed at St Paul’s preaching, resolves “to confess and declare his deeds.”<sup>2</sup>

In several other passages of his works the holy Abbot of Clairvaux speaks with the same insistence about pardons or indulgences. “Filled with fear for the multitude of my iniquities,” he says, “but trusting in thy mercy, I confess my faults to thee, O my Creator and Redeemer, who hast promised that, after sinning, we may gain the pardon of our sins by a true and humble confession; for I was conceived in iniquity, I was nourished in sin, and I have spent my whole life until now in sin.”<sup>3</sup> And again, “He who truly repents and is really contrite, shall obtain indulgence certainly and without delay.”<sup>4</sup>

9. The Crusades, then, mark a new era in the history of indulgences. This outburst of faith on the part of the faithful induced the Church to be more prodigal

<sup>1</sup> That large numbers answered this appeal St Bernard himself informs us: “Vacuantur urbes et castella, et pene jam non invenitur quem apprehendant septem mulieres, virum unum, adeo ubique viduae vivis remanent viris.”—Ep. 246.

<sup>2</sup> Act xix 18.

<sup>3</sup> Tract. de Interiori Domo, lib. xix, ed. Mabillon.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* c. xxi.

of her treasure towards her children. For what happened then made her, so to speak, realise more fully than she had hitherto done the value of a power which had lain half dormant within her, for until then she had used it but rarely and with restraint. Henceforth we shall find her gradually developing this power moved by her love and pity of poor humanity.

The indulgence of the Crusades, at first limited to those who actually went to the Holy Land, was later granted to all who should take part in any war against the infidel for the defence of faith and country, provided that it was a holy and just war, or, at least, that it was considered as such by the ecclesiastical authorities.

Already, as early as 1053, Pope Leo IX had granted a sort of Crusade indulgence to those papal soldiers who would have taken part in the war against the Normans. It may indeed be doubted whether this grant, though bearing a resemblance to indulgences as we now conceive them, is to be taken in the very sense which we now annex to this sort of concession. However this may be, we should avoid seeing here a grant of sacramental absolution, as a certain writer has thought it to be.<sup>1</sup>

We may also mention here the indulgence granted by Alexander II, in the year 1063, to those warriors who were about to start for Spain in order to wage war against the Moors, the Pope declaring expressly that he remitted them the penance imposed for the sins they had already confessed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is N. Paulus, who writes: "Doch könnte man auch an eine sakramentale Absolution denken, wie es ja auch heute noch vorkommen kann, dass ein Priester im Notfall einer ganzen Anzahl Personen eine gemeinsame Absolution erteilt."—*Wissenschaft*, Beilage zur Germania, N. 30, Irg. 1911. 27 Juli. We have already observed that indulgences do not belong to sacramental absolution.

<sup>2</sup> N. Paulus, *l.c.*

In 1118 Ildephonsus, or Alphonsus, King of Aragon, recovered from the Moors the town of Saragossa which had been in possession of the infidels for nearly four centuries. His first care was to re-establish the Christian religion in that town noted for its glorious body of martyrs and its peculiar devotion to the Mother of God. Peter Librana was elected Bishop and the king sent him to Gelasius II to be consecrated. The Pope received the Bishop-Elect with special benevolence, consecrated him with his own hands, and gave him letters in favour of the Christian army fighting against the infidels. These letters are dated from Alais in Languedoc, where the Pope was then in exile.<sup>1</sup>

Gelasius II granted, through the merits of the saints and the prayers of the whole Catholic Church, an indulgence to all who, having received penance, should meet death on this expedition.<sup>2</sup> He similarly granted an indulgence to those who helped to rebuild the Church of Saragossa and who contributed by their alms to the support of the clergy.

The pontifical letter left it to the discretion of the Bishops to fix the amount of the indulgence in proportion to the good works done. On his return to Saragossa, Librana, through his archdeacon, Miorrand, addressed a circular letter to the Catholics of the whole world, to acquaint them with the miserable state of his Church and to rouse their generosity by the inducement of indulgences. "Relying upon the divine mercy," says the Bishop, "on the authority of our holy Father, Pope Gelasius (whose letters relating to the crusade you will find transcribed below, preserved by us under the seal of our Church), and on the authority

<sup>1</sup> Epist. V Gelasii, Pp. II, ad exercitum christ. CaesarAugustam obsidentem. Data Alesti, IV. Id. Dec. apud Mansi, t. xxi, col. 169, 170.

<sup>2</sup> Baronius, ad ann. 1118, n. xviii. He erroneously assigns the date of 1115 for the taking of Saragossa.

of our Lord Bernard, Archbishop of Toledo and Legate of the holy Roman Church, and of all the Bishops of Spain, we remit . . . of penance.”<sup>1</sup> The blank space was to be filled up by each Bishop at his own discretion.

We may mention here, in connexion with the Crusade Bulls what was once called, in the style of the Curia, letters of absolution and also letters of indulgence—*litterae absolutionis*, *litterae indulgentiae*—by which was understood, not the granting of absolution or indulgence as such, but either a dispensation from the vow of joining the crusade, or the crusade indulgence accorded to those dispensed from taking part in the Crusade itself.<sup>2</sup>

10. It is remarkable that the Pope’s Bull is called in Librana’s circular letter, “the letter of the Cross—*Litterae Crucis*.” This expression, and the object of the letter containing it, have induced weighty authors to trace the origin of the celebrated “Bull of the Crusades—*Bulla Cruciatae*,” so famous in Spanish history ever since the middle of the sixteenth century, to the above incident.

This Bull, a real summary of the privileges granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs on various occasions to kings of Spain in favour of their subjects, is based on the same principles as Gelasius II’s letter to the Bishop of Saragossa. Although it proceeds from the Popes, its execution is entrusted to a Spanish prelate—by right, to the Archbishop of Toledo, whose business it is to fix the amount of good works to be performed. It is granted in favour of those who go in person to fight for the Church against her enemy, the Moslem; to those who, unable to go themselves, send a substitute, and to those who contribute towards the holy war by the offering

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* n. xix.

<sup>2</sup> See N. Paulus, “Die Anfänge des sogenannten Ablasses von Strafe und Schuld,” *Geschichte, etc.*, II B., xviii, p. 136 sqq.



of an alms, or some other pious work, to be determined by the Commissary of the *Bulla Cruciatæ*.

But, as it often happens, these privileges became extended to many more people than were first intended. Moreover, to the indulgences, which were the original object of the grant, various other favours were added, so that the Bull, without ceasing to be one document, is really equivalent to several distinct concessions.

In its fullest form it includes: first, a special gift of indulgences for both living and dead, with, on certain special conditions, formal participation in the "goods of the Church"; then, a partial or total exemption from the effects of an Interdict; a dispensation from fast and abstinence; facilities for absolution of reserved cases; the power of having vows commuted for other good works, and of obtaining a "composition" for illgotten goods when the owner cannot be discovered. This grant of privilege is valid for all provinces that are, or have been formerly, under the dominion of the kings of Spain. It even extends to persons going to those countries, if only for the very purpose of benefiting by it.<sup>1</sup>

As there is no war against the infidel going on now, the offerings of the faithful—an indispensable condition for profiting by the above-named favours—are used for other religious purposes. They chiefly serve for the keeping up of divine worship, and the fabric of St Peter's at Rome, always subject to heavy expenses, receives a considerable portion of them.

Some authors, who have eyes only for defects that they think may justify them in censuring the Church and her institutions, choose to see nothing in the "Bull

<sup>1</sup> The subject of the *Bula de la Cruzada* has been fully treated by F. Sydney Smith, S.J., in the *Month* for February and March, 1904. See also "Are Indulgences sold in Spain?" C.T.S., by the same author; Ferraris, "Bibliotheca," s.v. *Bulla Cruciatæ*; P. J. Ferreres, S.J., *Tractatus De Bulla Cruciatæ*, Theol. Moral. II, § 1330 seq.

of the Crusade " but a means of satisfying the rapacity of ecclesiastics and of extorting funds. We surmise that they would judge differently did they take the trouble to find out how the said funds are applied. If they could behold the numerous charities supported by this means, they might be convinced that if Rome is not ashamed to hold out one hand for alms, it is only that she may be able to distribute them with the other; but, faithful to her divine Master's precept, she lets not her left hand know what her right hand doeth.<sup>1</sup>

II. The first great crusade was followed by many others, which were all inspired both by the urgent needs of Christian society and by the ardent faith and warlike instincts of the Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> It is not our business here to make any detailed study of these chivalrous expeditions, which resemble one another very much; it will be enough to mention two, both raised by Alexander III.

The first was proclaimed in the years 1171-1172 against the heathen enemies of the Christian faith. The Pope exhorted the kings, princes and people of Denmark, Norway and the other Northern States of Europe to fight courageously, promising those who would fall in the fight the remission of all their sins. To the survivors he granted only a relaxation of one year.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi 3.

<sup>2</sup> See a detailed enumeration of these crusades in Amort, *op. cit.*, Part I, sect. ii, p. 54, *sqq.*

<sup>3</sup> These are the Pope's words: " Nos enim eis, qui adversus sæpe dictos paganos potenter et magnanimiter decertaverint, de peccatis suis, de quibus confessi fuerint, et poenitentiam acceperint, remissionem unius anni, confisi de misericordia Dei et meritis Apostolorum Petri et Pauli, concedimus, sicut his qui Sepulchrum Dominicum visitant concedere consuevimus. Illis autem qui in conflictu illo decesserint, omnium suorum, si poenitentiam acceperint, remissionem indulgemus peccatorum." The letter is dated on the " III Idus " of September, and begins with the words *Non parum*. See Jaffé, Reg. n. 8147; Sirmondi, Opp., t. iii, p. 866; D. Mansi, *Coll. conc.*, t. xxi, p. 936.

The second expedition was preached in 1179 against the Albigenses and other allied heretics. To understand the importance of this expedition, we must remember that these men were incessantly laying snares for Christians, whose faith they were most anxious to destroy; and, further, that they practised revolting cruelties towards widows, virgins, old men and children, sparing neither age nor sex; whilst they also desecrated churches and monasteries and, like barbarians, put everything in their way to the fire and the sword.

In face of such evils the Pope does not merely exhort, but commands the faithful to resist, and desires them to find the remission of their sins in the undertaking; "*cunctis autem fidelibus, in remissionem peccatorum omnium, injungimus ut tantis cladibus se viriliter opponant.*" He authorises them to confiscate the heretics' goods, and to reduce them to slavery under Christian princes; and he promises to any who may die in this war, provided they are truly contrite, indulgence for their sins and the reward of eternal life. To all who take part in the enterprise he remits two years of the penance that may have been imposed upon them; and if the war is prolonged, the Bishops are authorised to increase the indulgence. Should any man dare to despise the instructions of the Bishops on this point, he is deprived of communion; whilst, on the other hand, the Pope grants the protection of the Church to every man who goes on this expedition, just as if he had gone to visit the tomb of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

We may observe here how, soon after, the custom was introduced of extending the indulgence to those

<sup>1</sup> See Amort, *l.c.* n. x, p. 59. It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that it would be a great mistake to look upon these regulations under a light different from that of the time in which they were issued. See also N. Paulus, *l.c.*, p. 235.

who would send a substitute or else help, by money or otherwise, the keeping up of these expeditions. Pope Gregory VIII (1187) was the first to introduce this innovation.<sup>1</sup>

Alexander III granted another indulgence of the same kind when he exhorted the kings, princes and faithful of Denmark, Norway and the other Northern States of Europe to fight courageously against the heathen enemies of the Christian faith.

12. The failure of the crusades for delivering the Holy Land is well known. But neither the news of the reseizure of Jerusalem by the soldiers of the Crescent, nor that of the expulsion of the Christian armies from Palestine was sufficient to cool the ardour of the Western Christians. They longed to brave new perils and to fight again for the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord.

No doubt, many were attracted merely by a spirit of novelty, and a desire to see for themselves the wonderful countries and people often described in exaggerated terms by travellers returning from the East. But there were many also, who, innocent-minded and disinterested, amid surrounding corruption and rapacity, were moved by a pure sentiment of faith and charity. In the year 1212 a strange thing was seen: no less than fifty thousand children, carried away by juvenile enthusiasm, left their homes and country, in France and Germany, to fight for the Holy Land. They had no guide or commander, and were quickly disbanded, most of them not even crossing the Alps; but Innocent III took occasion from the incident to stimulate the indolence of some among the Western rulers.

In the following year, 1213, he issued a Bull, similar to the one he had published fifteen years before, to induce Christian princes and soldiers to undertake

<sup>1</sup> As regards the method followed by Gregory's successors, in reference to the following crusades, see N. Paulus, *l.c.*

a fresh Crusade. At the general Lateran Council of 1215, he renewed his entreaties, setting forth the deplorable condition of the Holy Places and the sufferings of the Christians. He promised to open the treasure of indulgences, and appointed June 1st, 1217, for the departure of the first batch of the new crusaders.

13. Among those who started on this expedition was the popular saint, Francis of Assisi, the chivalrous spirit and martial ardour of his youth being reawakened for the time. Twice before, burning with the thirst for martyrdom, he had started to convert the infidels, but each time circumstances had compelled him to return. This time he hoped to succeed better: indeed to shed his blood for Christ was his most ardent longing.

He started, not with the first party that set out, but in 1219. He embarked at Ancona with eleven companions, on a vessel going to the help of the Christians that were then besieging Damietta. When they landed, both armies were in sight of each other and it was impossible to reach the enemy's camp, the Sultan, Malek-Kamel, having promised a golden *byzant*<sup>1</sup> for every Christian head brought to him.

However, Francis's ardour made him resolve to face all danger, and to get into the Moslem encampment. God helped his generous resolve, and he was introduced into the tent of the Sultan, where he spoke so eloquently that Malek-Kamel is said to have expressed a desire of becoming a Christian but that he was detained from doing so through fear of his people. Dante recalls this incident in the beautiful lines that describe Francis devoured with thirst for martyrdom,

<sup>1</sup> An ancient gold coin so-called from Byzantium (now Constantinople) where it was struck. It was worth about £15 sterling. The French used to call it *le sou d'or*.



and preaching Christ and his followers in presence of the fierce Sultan.<sup>1</sup>

Later on, a son of the poor man of Assisi, St Bernardine of Siena, who inherited his father's apostolic spirit, was associated with the crusade undertaken by Eugenius IV against the Turks, then becoming daily a greater danger to Christendom. The Pope had, by a Bull, granted large indulgences to all who would send men to fight in this holy war, or who would at least help it by alms. Brother Bernardine of Siena was appointed to preach and to carry out this Bull "in all cities, lands, castles and places of Italy, of whatever province and diocese he may be pleased to choose." He was authorised to select as auxiliaries in this holy mission all ecclesiastics whom he wished to enlist from the secular or regular clergy and of any order and degree. The Bull is dated from Siena, May 26, 1443.<sup>2</sup>

14. There is no doubt whatever that the crusades gave the final blow to canonical penances. We have seen how Councils fulminated against the negligence of the faithful and ordered them to resume these practices, and how, in some places, attempts were made to win the faithful back to the old custom by making the penances less severe; but all in vain. Whatever may have been the cause, whether change of habits, weakening of constitution, or cooling of fervour, it is certain that the movement for putting aside the ancient canons grew stronger and stronger, until a time came, about the beginning of the twelfth century, when these canons were a mere dead letter, a relic of the past and a study for historians instead of a real practice.

<sup>1</sup> "E poichè, per la sete del martirio,  
Nella presenza del Soldan superbo,  
Predicò Christo e gli altri che'l seguìro."

—*Parad.*, cant. xi 110-112.

<sup>2</sup> "Bullettino Senese di Storia patria," 1st year, fasc. 1-11, p. 66, Siena, 1894.

The acts and canons of Councils, at that period, show how deeply the Church regretted this state of things, and how hard she tried to remedy it by protests, and even by promulgating censures.

But her children braved excommunications and cared little for interdicts. The haughty partisans of the German emperors, the effeminate courtiers of the kings of France and England, did not like the idea of submitting to a course of fasts on bread and water for having committed perjury. Neither were they likely to consent to spending twenty years at the church door weeping and confessing their faults and asking the prayers of the faithful, in order that they might atone for a homicide.

But the Church, like her divine Master, will not lay insupportable burdens on men's shoulders: her yoke, too, is sweet and her burden light.<sup>1</sup> She can adapt her discipline to the needs of a particular period and to human weakness. For canonical penance, after all, is only a matter of ecclesiastical discipline, which she has the right to soften or even to do away with when occasion requires—that is, when the institution seems more likely to prove a stumbling-block than to do good. Thus (A.D. 912) when Rollo, or Robert of Normandy, and his followers became Christians, and Hervé, Archbishop of Rheims, asked Pope John X what "Penitential" he should follow in their case, the Pope told him not to treat them according to severe canons, "as the burden might be too heavy for such unaccustomed subjects to bear, and might cause them to return to their old life."<sup>2</sup>

It was in the same spirit that the Church wisely determined to let the practice drop when the time of which we are speaking came. But she could not therefore leave the faithful without any means of satisfying for

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii 4; xi 30.

<sup>2</sup> Tom. ix Concil., p. 483.

their sins in this world, and so expose them to a far severer penalty in the next.

Hence, as we have shown, she adopted a different mode of dispensing her treasure of Christ's satisfactions, and accepted the participation in expeditions against the infidel, or even an alms offered for that purpose, as a substitute for the obsolete penances. By this means, after our Saviour's pattern, she reconciled the two things that at first sight seem irreconcilable: justice and mercy: "Mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed."<sup>1</sup>

15. However, the disuse of canonical penances had not become quite universal in the twelfth century. For one thing, the example of preceding centuries was too near to be quite forgotten; and, for another, that generous faith which inspired the first Christians to submit to severe penalties was yet living in men's souls. Hence there were many still remaining among the faithful who, if they committed blameworthy actions, were not ashamed to acknowledge them, and who, if they rebelled against the Church, readily submitted to the most severe and humiliating penitential practices.

We have an example of these sturdy penitential-minded Christians in the life of Bl. Berthold, who died in 1140. He was abbot of the Benedictine Monastery of St Mary of Steyrgarten, on the river Enns, near Steyr in Upper Austria. This holy man gave up most of his time to hearing confessions. His custom was to scourge all his penitents without distinction, and he would not dismiss them without having first administered a wholesome discipline to each one of them. When he was on his death-bed, he assembled his whole community, heard the confession of each of his monks in turn, and after scourging every one with his own

<sup>1</sup> See Ps. lxxxiv 11.

hand, gave them absolution, humbly begging their pardon for himself.<sup>1</sup> We read again in the life of St Hannon, Archbishop of Cologne, that he used to order others to scourge him, and that he subjected St Henry to a similar penance.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, there were some striking examples of public penance still to be seen, among them the well-known case of Henry II after the murder of St Thomas à Becket—too familiar to English readers to need repeating in detail here. We need only mention the promise the King made of taking the cross for three years, and the acknowledgement of the Pope's temporal supremacy over England.<sup>3</sup>

16. A still more exact idea of the view entertained by Christians at the end of the twelfth century on penance imposed by the sacred canons may be gained from the directions given by Robert of Flammesburg, Canon of St Victor, in his Penitential.<sup>4</sup>

He begins by saying that Doctors of the Church hold different opinions as to the amount and application of remissions granted for the building of churches, the construction of bridges and other works of a like

<sup>1</sup> Acta SS., t. vi Julii, p. 480, col. 1 et p. 486, col. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, note—On this kind of satisfaction see Morin, *De Admin. Sac. Poenit.*, l. vii, c. xiv.

<sup>3</sup> "Praeterea ego et major filius meus rex, juramus quod a Domino Alexandro Papa et ejus Catholicis successoribus recipiemus et tenebimus regnum Angliae."—Bar. a. 1172, n. 5. "Vestrae jurisdictionis est regnum Angliae, et quantum ad feudatarii juris obligationem, vobis dumtaxat obnoxius teneor et obstringor." *Ibid.*, a. 1173, n. 10. See Pet. Blesius, Ep. 136. On the position of the Pope with regard to England considered as a fief of the Holy See, the reader may consult Card. Gasquet's volume: *Henry III and the Church*, London, 1905. The conclusion to which a close study of contemporary documents leads the author is that, notwithstanding a serious dissension between England and the Holy See on temporal matters, the Pope's spiritual supremacy was assumed as an uncontested fact established by Christ himself. *Intro.* p. xii.

<sup>4</sup> See Amort, Part II, sect. ii, n. iv, pp. 32, 33.

nature. Then he advises penitents, especially if they are burdened with sins and penances, to avail themselves of these indulgences. "In imposing penances," he says, "I consider the circumstances—viz., the age of the penitent and his behaviour—and according to what I find I give the punishment. If he will not accept the canonical penance—*i.e.*, that which is prescribed by the canons—I carefully warn him not to injure thus his soul, and I show myself ready to soften the penalty in every possible way. If I have to deal with a penitent who frequently falls back into the same faults, then fearing lest he should fall into despair if he finds his penance constantly increased, I usually send him away with the same penance that he had before, or I even lighten it, and sometimes go so far as to suppress it altogether: but I always warn him to leave off sinning. 'My brother,' I say to him, 'as long as thou canst endure it, beware of diminishing the penance that I gave thee; but if it is too much for thee, at least give up thy sin, and I will cut off as much of it as thou wishest, at thy desire.'"<sup>1</sup>

Amort, *l.c.*



CHAPTER VI  
THE GREAT JUBILEE  
A.D. 1300

“ In the year of Jubilee all shall return to their possessions.”—*Lev. xxv 13.*

The part of the faithful in the observance of tradition—Unexpected concourse of pilgrims to St Peter’s—Great crowds at Rome—Giotto and Dante—Derivation of the word *Jubilee*—Origin of the Christian Jubilee—Jubilee of Clement VI—Subsequent Jubilees—St Diego of Seville—Sixtus IV and the suspension of Indulgences—The Holy Door—Its mystical meaning—The Jubilee of 1550—That of 1575, St Charles Borromeo and St Alexander Sauli at Rome—Jubilee of 1600—Jubilee of 1700—Extraordinary Jubilees—Extended Jubilees—The holy “Veronica,” or impression of the Holy Face of Christ—The Crucifix of the Servite Fathers at St Marcellus in Rome.

HOWEVER little one may be acquainted with the Epistles of St Paul, one certainly cannot fail to notice how constantly the great Doctor of the Gentiles insists upon the comparison between the human body and the Church of Christ.

In his view the Church is no lifeless body, and still less does it consist of members detached from one another. The Church is a living society, united and compact, made up of numerous members under a single head; each portion of which is bound to act for the good of the whole, whilst deriving its own particular advantage from the strengthening of the entire body.

Consequently those who look upon the Church as consisting only of the pastors who govern her, or, on the

other hand, only of the laity, are looking at only a portion of the truth, as they are separating what is by its very nature joined together. In this respect, Protestants who style themselves "Episcopalians" or "Presbyterians" are no more in the right than those who would be called "Evangelicals" or "Methodists."

But between the head and the members there is a natural difference, and there must be diversity of offices. To the head belongs the right of directing, guiding and commanding; the other members have the duty of carrying out the commands according to the impulse given by the head. In matters of faith it is not the mission of the faithful to give judgement as to doctrines, but to receive and observe what is taught. At the same time it belongs to them to bear witness to existing truths, and their testimony is accepted by the pastors. In fact, the pastors sometimes found the solemn recognition of a hitherto unsanctioned truth on the general testimony of the faithful, and more than one definition of faith has been thus prepared for.

Thus, the faithful are at the same time witnesses of divine truth and the determining cause of new definitions; and hence, in their own sphere of activity, their testimony is true. Our Lord's prayer, asking for St Peter that his faith should not fail,<sup>1</sup> was for all members of the Church as well as for the Prince of the apostles. For, if St Peter was the rock on which the Church was to rest, he was also, as a son of that Church, representing all the successive human generations destined to fill to the end of time the mysterious bark sailing to the eternal shore.

In the last chapter we have seen how the pastors of the Church, moved by serious considerations, confirmed, on a solemn occasion, the tradition as to the practice of indulgences. In the present chapter we

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxii 32.

propose to trace a further development of the same tradition—this time brought about by the faithful themselves. We shall find the action of the Christian people appearing in it as a clear proof, not only of the divine origin of indulgences, but of the equally divine origin of their development in practice. And hence, to deny the doctrine of indulgences or to accuse the Sovereign Pontiffs of being mistaken in the matter, is to admit the indefensible conclusion that the whole body of the faithful have been led into error by receiving, with one accord, a doctrine and practice contrary to Revelation.

2. Towards the end of the year 1299 a report was spread in Rome that each Roman citizen who should visit the Basilica of St Peter's in the course of the following year, 1300, would gain a plenary indulgence for all his sins, and that this privilege was granted once every century.<sup>1</sup>

Pope Boniface VIII was then the occupant of the See of Peter. Hearing of this rumour, he had careful research made in all the Roman archives, but nothing was found authorising the reported indulgence.

On the evening of January 1, 1300, an enormous crowd of people flocked to St Peter's, and the influx continued till midnight, as though the indulgence was to end with that day. However, the spontaneous pilgrimage went on for two months, reaching its maximum on the Sunday after the Octave of the Epi-

<sup>1</sup> On the Jubilee of 1300 and the following ones, see Virginio Prinzivalli, *Gli Anni Santi, Appunti storici con molte note inedite tratte dagli Archivi di Roma*, Rome, 1899; Boudinhon, in *Le Canoniste contemporain*, February to June, 1900; Father Herbert Thurston, S.J., "The Holy Year of Jubilee," London, 1900, the *Month*, vol. xciv, December, 1899, p. 561. Also vol. xcv, October, 1901, p. 429; September, 1912, p. 301. The reader will also find valuable information in N. Paulus, "Der Jubiläumsablass," in *Geschichte, etc.*, II Band, xvi, p. 100.—*Collationes Brugenses*, 1900, 1901, 1925.

phany (which fell that year on January 17), on which Sunday it was then the custom to expose the *Veronica*—i.e., the picture of our Lord's sacred Face—for public veneration.

From the Lateran Palace, where he resided, the Sovereign Pontiff attentively watched this stream of devotion, and in the absence of written documents bearing on the point, he had minute inquiries made as to oral traditions.

At that time there came to Rome an aged man, who said he was a hundred and seven years old. The Pope sent for him; and, in the presence of several witnesses, the old man told His Holiness that he distinctly remembered how his father, a peasant, had come to Rome a hundred years before to gain the indulgence, and had remained there as long as the provisions that he had brought with him had lasted. He had afterwards warned his son not to fail to go to Rome at the following centenary, should he be still in this world, a thing which, the old pilgrim added, did not seem very likely to him. Some of those present then asked him why he had come to Rome now; and he replied that he had undertaken the journey because "the faithful might gain 100 years' indulgence every day in this centenary year."

The same conviction respecting the matter that was held in Rome obtained also in France, as was stated by two old Frenchmen from Beauvais, both over a hundred years old, who came as pilgrims to Rome, and who told everybody that they had come, "after the tradition of their country," to gain the *centenary plenary indulgence*. Many Italians made similar statements.

Taking all these into account the Pope, with the advice of the cardinals, published a Bull in which he confirmed and renewed all the indulgences formerly granted (according to the faithful report given by

these old people), to all who visited the tombs of the apostles. This is the famous Bull, *Antiquorum habet fida relatio*, of February 22, 1300, by which the Pope authorises and confirms the institution of the *Jubilee*.<sup>1</sup> But, to promote the people's devotion to the tombs of the apostles and to sanctuaries, the Pope, making use of his full apostolic power, granted to all who, "truly contrite and confessed," should visit the Basilicas dedicated to those two saints, full and entire remission of the penalty due to their sins, which remission could be gained through the whole of that year, and every hundredth year afterwards.

In the same Bull the Pope fixed the number of visits to be made by both Romans and foreigners, and ended by saying that each one's merit would be so much the greater, and the indulgence so much the more efficacious, as the visits were more frequent and the devotion more sincere.<sup>2</sup>

3. It would be difficult to say how enthusiastically the people received this Bull. The Romans set the example, making the prescribed visits to the appointed churches without distinction of sex or age. From England, Germany, Spain and other countries there came a crowd of pilgrims, not only strong men, but old people, and even the sick carried in litters. Among others came an old man from Savoy, carried by his children, who remembered the ceremonies of the former centenary.

All these details are handed down by Cardinal Gaetano Stefaneschi, who was then living in Rome and who was a member of the Pope's Council. The

<sup>1</sup> This Bull will be found in Amort, Part I, sect. iii.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Lea fully acknowledges—following history—that this movement was entirely spontaneous (*op. cit.*, p. 199), and takes note that no alms were exacted for gaining the indulgence (p. 202); yet this does not prevent his declaring that the Jubilee was looked upon as a purely financial affair.



Florentine historian, Villani, confirms the whole account and adds: "It was the most wonderful thing ever witnessed, that during that whole year there were continually to be seen in Rome, without counting the Roman people, more than two hundred thousand pilgrims, besides those who were on the road either coming or going. All were well treated and furnished with food at a fair price, for their horses as well as for themselves; and that with great patience and without fuss or discussion. I can bear witness to this as I was present and saw it all."<sup>1</sup> Lami reports a monumental inscription that existed in his time at Florence in a street called *della Fogna*; it testified that in the year 1300 pilgrims came to Rome from all parts, even from Tartary, to gain the Jubilee indulgence.<sup>2</sup>

A painting by Ligozzi, still existing in the great Council Hall of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, represents the reception of twelve ambassadors sent by various powers or princes to Pope Boniface VIII on the occasion of this Jubilee. The powers or princes represented were, France, England, the King of Bohemia, the Emperor of Germany, the Republic of Ragusa, the Lord of Verona, the Great Khan of Tartary, the Kings of Naples and Sicily, the Republic of Pisa, the Lord of Camerino and the Grand Master of Jerusalem. For the honour and glory of Florence it may be noted that all these ambassadors were Florentines, which caused the Pope—astonished at seeing such a number of one nationality—to exclaim, "You make a fifth element!"<sup>3</sup>

The foundation of a house for English pilgrims coming to Rome, by John Shepherd and his wife Alice,

<sup>1</sup> *Chronique*, lib. viii, c. xxxvi, edit. Trieste, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> This inscription is quoted by Mansi, ap. Raynald., *Ann. Eccl.* a. 1300, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Valéry, *Voyages historiques et littéraires en Italie*, p. 248, Brussels, 1835.

is traced back to this Jubilee. They opened it in a modest form, seeing that there was no place of the kind for their fellow-countrymen; and it afterwards became a royal charity, patronised by the Kings of England, who appointed its rector.<sup>1</sup>

4. Two of the most illustrious pilgrims brought to Rome by Boniface VIII's Jubilee were Giotto and Dante, who have left, each in his own manner, lasting evidence of the feelings which it awakened in their hearts. Giotto painted, on the walls of the great *Loggia* of the Lateran Basilica, a fresco representing the Pope at the moment of publishing the Jubilee, which is considered by his admirers to be one of his best works.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately only a fragment of the fresco remains; and this shows Pope Boniface between two cardinals in the act of announcing the Jubilee from the loggia of the church.<sup>3</sup>

As to the author of the *Divine Comedy*, Balbo<sup>4</sup> thinks it probable that the idea of this great poem first came into Alighieri's mind when he saw that wonderful Jubilee.<sup>5</sup> However that may be, Dante makes more than one reference to it. When, in the *Inferno*, he wishes to give an idea of the multitude of lost souls hurled into the abyss of hell, he compares them to the crowd of pilgrims crossing the bridge of St Angelo during the Jubilee year:

<sup>1</sup> Wiseman, *The Four Last Popes*, Leo XII, ch. iv, p. 180. See also W. J. D. Croke, LL.D., "The National English Institutions in Rome during the Fourteenth Century," in the *Dublin Review*, vol. cxxxiv, pp. 274, *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> Armellini, *Le Chiese di Roma dal sec. IV al XIX*, Roma, 1891, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> This fragment has been transferred from its primitive place to the second pier in the first aisle on the right of the Basilica.

<sup>4</sup> *Vita*, I, 10.

<sup>5</sup> See in the *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze sociali e discipline ausiliarie*, July and September, 1900, an essay by Filippo Ermini: *Il Giubileo del trecento e l'Ispirazione della Divina Commedia*.

E'en thus the Romans, when the year returns  
 Of Jubilee, with better speed to rid  
 The thronging multitude, their means devise  
 For such as pass the bridge, that on one side  
 All front towards the castle and approach  
 St Peter's fane, on th' other towards the mount.

Again, in the *Purgatorio*:

"Not without purpose once more to return  
 Thou find'st me, my Casella, where I am,  
 Journeying this way," I said; "but how of thee?  
 Hath so much time been lost?" He answer'd straight:  
 "No outrage hath been done to me, if he,  
 Who, when and whom he chooses, takes, hath oft  
 Denied me passage here; since of just will  
 His will he makes. These three months passed indeed,  
 He, whoso chose to enter, with free leave  
 Hath taken; whence I wand'ring by the shore  
 Where Tiber's wave grows salt, of him gain'd kind  
 Admittance. . . ."

Also, it is highly probable that it was in memory of all he had seen at the Jubilee that Dante wrote again in the *Paradiso*:

Like a wight  
 Who haply from Croatia wends to see  
 Our Veronica; and the while 'tis shown,  
 Hangs over it with never-sated gaze,  
 And, all that he hath heard revolving, saith  
 Unto himself in thought: And didst thou look  
 E'en thus, O Jesus, my true Lord and God?  
 And was this semblance thine? . . ."

5. It must be noted that in his Bull, Pope Boniface VIII does not use the word "Jubilee." However, as the custom prevailed to call the great Pardon by this name, it will be well to say something of its meaning.

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, canto xviii. The mount mentioned here is called Monte Giordano.

<sup>2</sup> *Purgatorio*, canto ii.

<sup>3</sup> *Paradiso*, canto xxxi. We shall say further (n. 18) what the Veronica was which pilgrims came to venerate in Rome especially during the Jubilee year.

It should be noted, in the first place, that authors are not agreed upon the origin of that word. Some derive it from the Hebrew word *jobel*—which means a *ram*, because the Israelites announced their Jubilee with a trumpet made of a ram's horn, or in imitation of one. St Jerome,<sup>1</sup> however, chooses to derive the word "jubilee" from *jobal*, another Hebrew word meaning *remission*. Josephus<sup>2</sup> gives to the word the sense of *liberty*, whilst Dom Calmet, in his *Dictionnaire Biblique*, prefers the etymology of the Hebrew *hobil*, which means to *give back* or to *make restitution*, because, with the Jews, all goods and possessions returned to their original owners at the Jubilee.

But all these etymologies agree in this respect: that they put before us, in different forms, one and the same institution, formulated and described in Leviticus as follows:

"Thou shalt also number to thee seven weeks of years, that is to say, seven times seven, which together make forty-nine years: and thou shalt sound the trumpet in the seventh month, the tenth day of the month, in the time of the expiation in all your land. And thou shalt sanctify the fiftieth year, and shalt proclaim remission to all the inhabitants of thy land: for it is the year of jubilee. Every man shall return to his possession, and every one shall go back to his former family: because it is the jubilee and the fiftieth year. You shall not sow nor reap the things that grow in the field of their own accord, neither shall you gather the first fruits of the vines, because of the sanctification of the jubilee: but as they grow, you shall presently eat them. In the year of the Jubilee all shall return to their possessions."<sup>3</sup>

Such was the Hebrew Jubilee, and such the rules

<sup>1</sup> In his *Commentary on Isaias*, c. iii.

<sup>2</sup> *Jewish Antiquities*, l. iii.

<sup>3</sup> Levit. xxv 8-13.

to be observed in keeping it. The Church, succeeding to the mission of the Synagogue, and hence charged with restoring man to his Creator, adopted this wholesome institution by suiting it to her own purposes. She, too, would have her jubilee; but instead of making it an occasion for putting her children back into possession of their temporal goods, she would use it to enable them to recover their lost friendship with God, thus affording them a propitious occasion of returning, so to speak, to their rightful inheritance in the possession of divine grace given to them at baptism, and offering them a full remission of the penalty due for their sins.

The Hebrew Jubilee re-established man in his social and domestic capacity, by putting him again into possession of his property and restoring him, if needful, to the bosom of his family. The Christian Jubilee makes him once more a fellow-citizen with the saints and a member of God's own household. It makes him fit to be at once admitted to the Beatific Vision should death overtake him whilst in this state of grace.

6. The origin of the Christian Jubilee is lost in the mist of time. What we have just described as happening in Rome under Boniface VIII proves that some analogous institution must have existed long before the beginning of the fourteenth century, and that its tradition had no doubt been carried down from several centuries earlier.<sup>1</sup>

The jubilee granted by Boniface VIII, then, was in fact no innovation. It must rather be looked upon as the solemn recognition of a custom that had existed from time immemorial, and as the sanction permanently

<sup>1</sup> On the evidence drawn from the Chronicle of Alberic of Three Fountains, in favour of previous jubilees, see Fr. H. Thurston, "The Year of Jubilee," etc., the *Month*, December, 1899, p. 566.



defining and determining a practice which until then had been but tacitly recognised.

This mode of viewing Boniface VIII's indulgence is expressed by a fourteenth-century inscription placed on one of the three entrance doors—the right-hand one—at the Cathedral of Siena, in the following terms:

ANNVS : CENTENVS : ROMAE : SEMPER :  
 EST : IVBILAENVS : CRIMINA : LAXANTVR :  
 CVI : PAENITET : ISTA : DONANTVR : HAEC :  
 DECLARAVIT : BONIFATIVS : ET : ROBO-  
 RAVIT<sup>1</sup>

“Every hundredth year is a jubilee year in Rome. Crimes are remitted and forgiven to him who repents. This thing Boniface declared and confirmed.”

Three years before granting the solemn jubilee, Boniface himself had declared, in his constitution *Frequenti*, that from the earliest times the Roman Pontiffs, his predecessors, had granted various indulgences, which he himself acknowledged and amplified.<sup>2</sup> Later, Clement VIII<sup>3</sup> declared that it was a very ancient custom in the Church to grant a very copious indulgence to pilgrims who came to Rome. We do not, however, know on what documents some authors assert that the jubilee institution goes back to apostolic times.

But what reason had the faithful for keeping the return of the first year of each century with such extraordinary solemnity? We shall probably not be far from the truth if we attribute the custom to remembrance of our blessed Lord's birth. The heathens themselves used always to celebrate the beginning of

<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations of the old inscription are here filled in.

<sup>2</sup> Raynald., A.D. 1297, n. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Constit. *Annus Domini*, Bullar., t. iv, p. 83.

a century; and it was the general opinion that the centenary of our Redeemer's birth coincided with the first year of each new century. Hence, it is easy to understand that, by a spontaneous impulse of faith, all Christians should come to look upon that year as one of great spiritual rejoicing, characterised by full remission of penalties due for sin.<sup>1</sup>

7. In his Bull of February 22, 1300, Boniface had decreed that the plenary indulgence granted by him should be renewed every hundred years. But Clement VI, on his accession to St Peter's chair (1342), received a deputation at Avignon from the Roman people, who came to ask him, among other things, the reduction of the interval granted by Boniface to fifty years. The reason alleged for this request was that so few men could live long enough to profit by the grace, if the first disposition were kept to. The Pope willingly gave his consent, and published on January 27, 1343, the famous Bull *Unigenitus*, which has been inserted in the *Corpus Juris*.<sup>2</sup>

This Bull formally recognises the existence in the Church of an infinite treasure of merits entrusted to the distribution of St Peter and his successors. This is the most important document that has emanated from the Holy See on the subject of indulgences. Taken in its entirety, the Bull preserves the conditions

<sup>1</sup> See Mansi's note to Raynaldi's *Annals*, A.D. 1300, n. 1. See also in the *Civiltà Cattolica* the articles "Bonifazio VIII e l'Anno secolare 1300" (January 6, 1900) and "Roma nell' Anno giubilare, 1300" (March 17, 1900). One should also call to mind the splendid demonstrations of faith witnessed all over the Catholic world in honour of our Blessed Redeemer at the opening of the present century.—From all that has been said, the reader may well infer how unwarranted is Mr. Lea's insinuation who, speaking of Boniface VIII's jubilee (p. 200), says that "it was probably a chance suggestion, eagerly caught and hastily put into execution."

<sup>2</sup> *Extrav. comm.*, l. v, tit. ix, De Poenit. et Remiss. Denzinger 550.

prescribed by Boniface VIII for gaining the indulgence, but it adds the Lateran to the Churches of SS Peter and Paul to be visited by all who would gain it.

When the Jubilee year was approaching, Clement VI thought it expedient to renew the Bull issued by him seven years before, in order to arouse in the faithful a desire to take advantage of the "holy year," and to get them to prepare for the great indulgence, which from that time forth was officially named the Jubilee.<sup>1</sup>

It should be observed here that the faithful were already well prepared to receive this spiritual favour. As we said above, less than two years previously Europe had been laid waste by a scourge so terrible that nothing similar had ever been seen in history. An epidemic, known as the black death, had first broken out in Florence, in April, 1348. From there it had rapidly spread throughout Italy, France, Spain, Germany and England, bringing everywhere desolation and death.

Pope Clement, in order to console the faithful, had granted to all priests the power of absolving from all sorts of sins those who were attacked by that illness, and to give them also the plenary indulgence, while granting special indulgences to the priests who administered the sacraments to the pest-stricken, as also to those who assisted them or buried the dead.<sup>2</sup>

Considering the dispositions of the faithful at that time, we can well imagine how this indulgence was calculated to console the dying and prepare the survivors to answer the invitation, which he was about to issue to the faithful of the whole world, of betaking themselves to Rome to receive the full pardon of their sins.

<sup>1</sup> Bellarm. *De Indulg.*, l. i, c. l. On the jubilee of Clement VI, see N. Paulus, "Der Jubiläumsablass vom Jahre 1350," *Geschichte* etc., II. B., xvi, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Bull of Clement VI of May 19, Amort, Part I, p. 199.

History has recorded the marvellous fervour shown by the people in celebrating this jubilee, which began on Christmas Day, 1349.<sup>1</sup> That year the plague was still ravaging all Europe, and the cold was unusually intense, but nothing stopped the pilgrims. They faced ice and snow, torrents of rain, and even death itself. The roads to Rome, notwithstanding their being almost impassable, were crowded day and night with multitudes of men and women of all ranks. The inns and other houses along the route were not sufficient to shelter men and horses. The Germans and Hungarians, more accustomed than others to the cold, would stay in the open air, and spend whole nights there, grouped around large fires. The innkeepers could not meet the wants of all their guests, and often had not time to take the payment due to them. In such case the money would be left for them on a table, and not a single traveller would think of touching it in the master's absence.

No quarrels or disturbances were witnessed on the roads, such as could destroy the peace of these pious crowds. The pilgrims were full of sympathy and kindness for one another. Now and then thieves would try to attack them, but they knew how to defend themselves, and for the most part they were protected by the inhabitants of the countries through which they passed.

To keep an exact account of all the pilgrims was impossible. But according to a calculation of the Roman people there were 'from Christmas to Easter about 1,120,000 foreigners in Rome, and for the feasts of the

<sup>1</sup> The Holy Year Indulgence always begins with the First Vespers of Christmas and likewise concludes with the First Vespers of Christmas in the following year. This is a survival of the ancient custom, which continued well on into the sixteenth century, of reckoning the New Year from the Nativity of our Lord instead of from the first day of January.

Ascension and Pentecost upward of 800,000. During the summer the heat, of course, caused the number to diminish, but it never went below 200,000. The streets of Rome were usually so packed with people, that the only thing to do was to let oneself be carried on by the crowd. The "Romans" visited the three Basilicas every day, and some even oftener, according to their individual fervour.

Henry, a monk of Rebdorff, records that on Passion Sunday, as they were exposing the "Holy Face," there were such multitudes at St Peter's that several people were suffocated. Matthew Villani adds that, to satisfy public devotion, the Holy Face was shown every Sunday and feast day, and that on one of these occasions twelve persons were thrown down and trodden under foot.<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the year the crowds became almost as great again as at the beginning. It was then that great personages of Italy and other countries came flocking to Rome. During the last days of the Jubilee, all those that were in Rome were dispensed from whatever visits they had not had time to make, so that they should not leave the city without the indulgence.

8. Some years afterwards, in 1389, Urban VI reduced the interval between one Jubilee and the next to thirty-three years, in honour of the thirty-three years of our Lord's mortal life. He fixed the next Jubilee for the following year (1390); but he died before it came, and was succeeded by Boniface IX, who confirmed his predecessor's decision and opened the Jubilee at the appointed date.

This Jubilee also caused a great influx of pilgrims to Rome,<sup>2</sup> although the schism which had drawn away

<sup>1</sup> *Cronica*, lib. i, c. lvi, Trieste, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> Bzovius (apud Amort, *De Indulg.*, Part I, sect. iii, v) records that on the occasion of this Jubilee the pilgrims brought with them abundant alms, which were used for repairing the churches



so many provinces of Western Europe from the Roman obedience, did not allow of so great multitudes as at the preceding Jubilee. The French and other peoples of the Avignon obedience refused to accept the reduction of time made by Urban VI, whom they did not look upon as the lawful Pope. These, therefore, observed the Jubilee of 1400, and consequently started on their journey to Rome. However, the enmity which then existed between the king of France, Charles VI, who adhered to the Avignon "obedience," and the Pope of Rome, Boniface IX, made the king fear that this pilgrimage, by enriching the Papal States, would impoverish his own subjects and also lessen their number, thus enabling his enemies to invade the kingdom. He therefore proceeded to forbid every-

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and for the war against the infidels. But these alms did not meet all the Pope's necessities, for the Basilicas were nearly all in ruin on account of the long stay of the Popes at Avignon, and the needs of the "holy war" had increased every day. Therefore Boniface IX sent over Europe commissioners, whose business it was to beg for more abundant alms from the faithful. These commissioners did not always behave with the moderation and dignity that became their position, for which the Pope severely reprimanded them; whilst God himself also intervened by letting some of those who had thus abused the authority given them die a violent death.

Speaking of the sums supposed to have been thus collected by Boniface IX, Mr. Lea (p. 207) infers that in the Pope's mind, "it was vastly more productive to collect from penitents at home sums equivalent to what the pilgrimage would cost them, than to have them come to Rome." For this reason, according to him, Boniface IX dissuaded the faithful from coming to the Eternal City for the Jubilee of 1400, even to the point of notifying them that no special indulgences were to be gained. The fact is that if Boniface dissuaded the faithful from coming to Rome in 1400, he took that course from quite another motive. To recognise the Jubilee of 1400 would have been expressly to disavow his own decrees and those of his predecessor Urban VI, as indeed Mr. Lea himself acknowledges a few lines lower down. Further on in his book (p. 210) Mr. Lea, speaking of the suspension of indulgences decreed by Sixtus IV in view of the Jubilee year of 1475, attributes to that measure a purely financial motive (see above, p. 355).

body from undertaking the journey, and ordered those already on the way to retrace their steps at once under severe penalties; for which reason that Jubilee was relatively but little attended.

Still less frequented, on account of the wars then devastating Europe, was the Jubilee promulgated by Martin V for the year 1423.

Later on Nicholas V decided on going back to Urban VI's decree and to the period of fifty years appointed by him for the return of Jubilees. Consequently, on Christmas Eve, 1449, he inaugurated the "Holy Year," which was one of the most memorable in history. Several circumstances concurred to make the Jubilee of Nicholas V particularly memorable. In the first place, the cessation of the great schism of the West was well calculated to open the hearts of the faithful to a sense of joy and gladness. To understand this, it is well to recall summarily the events which crowded between the years 1439 and 1448.

The Fathers of the pseudo-council of Basle, after having deposed, on June 25, 1439, the legitimate Pope, Eugenius IV, had elected in his place, on November 5 of the same year, an anti-pope in the person of Amedeus, duke of Savoy, who took the name of Felix V. But Eugenius's successor, Nicholas V, elected in 1447, induced the intruder freely to renounce an election which had but increased the state of confusion then reigning. Hence Felix V resigned in 1448, thus putting an end to the great schism which had afflicted the Church. No better occasion, therefore, could be found to invite the Christian people to meet in Rome in order to thank God for the cessation of an evil which has had no equal in the annals of history.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the cessation of the schism and the history of this jubilee, see Dr. Baron Ludwig von Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste*, I. Band, s. 325)

On the other hand, the memory of the evils following on war and pestilence were still fresh among European nations, and enkindled in all hearts an earnest desire to appease the divine wrath and make amends for past crimes. Hence the bright prospect of obtaining the great pardon from the Vicar of Christ could but induce many to undertake the journey to Rome.

The eternal city saw again the crowds of devout pilgrims and witnessed the demonstrations of faith and fervour which she had beheld a hundred years before, and again the pressure caused loss of life to several people. One day a panic raised by a mule in the crowd on the bridge of St Angelo produced such a rush to the sides that the parapets were broken down and over eighty persons were drowned in the Tiber, whilst others were killed in the stampede. Nicholas V was greatly distressed at the catastrophe. He had the bodies of the victims taken out of the river and buried with all the solemnity due to men who had died in the performance of penitential exercises. He afterwards had some houses pulled down to make freer passage for the pilgrims.

9. It was during this Jubilee that Rome was favoured, as she is more apt to be than any other town in the world, by the sight of the wonders wrought by a great servant of God. This was St Diego of Seville, a simple Franciscan lay-brother, who had come among the rest to gain the great Pardon. He was for some time after his arrival lost in the great body of three thousand eight hundred Religious who had assembled at the *Ara Coeli* for the Jubilee; but his virtue soon caused him to be singled out from the throng, and to be put to tend the numerous pilgrims who had fallen sick within the monastery.

His very wonderful self-sacrifice and tenderness in nursing the patients, was joined to a wonderful

charm that attached to everything he did. He, too, possessed a deep and clear knowledge of Catholic theology which was quite marvellous in him, for he had not studied at schools. Hence no wonder that he attracted every one who came into contact with him, even the most learned. More than once, too, his sanctity was proved before the world by miracles that he performed for the benefit of the sick, bread and wine increasing under his hands, when provisions in Rome ran so low that there was not sufficient for all to eat. Moreover, God sometimes rewarded Diego's courage and mortification in treating the most disgusting cases of disease with really loving care, by granting him the power of miraculously curing some of his patients. Not unfrequently by only anointing them with oil from a lamp that hung before a statue of our Lady, and by making the sign of the cross on them, he restored them to perfect health.

10. The happy spiritual results of the Jubilee of 1450 could be seen so clearly that they created a desire for a further reduction of the time intervening between one Jubilee and another. Fifty years was too long a time for many people to count on. Therefore, by a Bull of April 19, 1470, Paul II reduced the interval to twenty-five years.<sup>1</sup> The next Jubilee, therefore, was to take place in 1475.

However, Paul II died before inaugurating it. His successor, Sixtus IV, confirmed his predecessor's decision,<sup>2</sup> and furthermore decreed that the indulgences granted to churches all over the world should be suspended during the year of Jubilee. The fresh Holy Year was accordingly opened on Christmas Day, 1474;

<sup>1</sup> Bull *Ineffabilis Providentia*, 13 Kal. Mai., 1470, apud Amort, Part I, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Bull *Quemadmodum operosi Pastoris*, 4 Kal. Sept., 1473, Amort, Part I, p. 93.

but, on account of wars then being carried on by France, England, Spain, Hungary and Portugal, the number of pilgrims was much smaller than at the preceding Jubilees.

The fact of Sixtus IV suspending ordinary indulgences during the Jubilee year, which practice has generally been followed ever since, is easily accounted for by the desire the Church has that the faithful should repair to Rome, there to visit the tombs of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and strengthen their faith at the contact of the martyrs' relics. Moreover, the special facilities of obtaining remission of sins and of bettering one's life which accompany each Jubilee, are ample compensation for the suspension of other indulgences, all of which may be said to be virtually contained in the Jubilee indulgence.<sup>1</sup>

II. But to return to the history of the Jubilees.

It does not belong to us to speak in detail here of the suspension of indulgences, the question belonging properly to moral theology. It will be enough to say that indulgences applicable to the dead are not suspended during the Jubilee year. For fuller particulars the reader may consult Beringer, S.J., *Les Indulgences*, etc., among others. It was natural to expect that here also Mr. Lea should malign the Catholic Church. The custom of suspending ordinary indulgences during the Jubilee year is for him but one more proof that "the sole object of the Jubilee was financial and not spiritual profit" (p. 210). Of course, all the facts he brings must fit in this mould. Indeed, these facts afford Mr. Lea an occasion for one of his most virulent attacks on indulgences, in which, however, he betrays once again the biased state of his mind. One instance may suffice. He writes (p. 219): "It is not without reason that Dr. Amort remarks that if indulgences have the power to liberate sinners so easily from the necessity of satisfaction, their suspension during the Jubilee is the greatest of evils, and the Holy Year ought not to be called the year of Jubilee, but the year of grief and sorrow." Now there are just four words following immediately on these words, which Mr. Lea carefully avoids, but which change altogether the sense of that quotation: *Sed hoc est absurdum* (Amort, Part II, p. 211, § xxi, argum. xix). Amort's purpose in this place is to prove that the actual worth of indulgences is dependent on the nature of the good works we perform rather than on the concession of the Church (see above,



It fell to the lot of Alexander VI to celebrate the Jubilee of 1500. In imitation of the Jewish practice he had it proclaimed three times throughout Rome at the sounding of a trumpet, and an extraordinary concourse of people from all countries responded to the Pope's fatherly call.

A special ceremony, intended to help the faithful in realising how the indulgence of the Jubilee opens the gates of heaven to the repentant sinner on this occasion, heightened the interest of the celebrations. This was the opening and closing of the "*Porta Santa*." The successors of Alexander VI have kept up this ceremony at all succeeding Jubilees, except when prevented by circumstances.

On Christmas Eve a procession is formed, consisting of the Pope, carried on the *Sedia Gestatoria*, the Cardinals, the Bishops, the secular and regular clergy, and all those in any way connected with the papal court. This procession starts from the Sistine Chapel, goes down the *Scala regia* round St Peter's great square, and finally enters the great portico of the Basilica, all doors of which have previously been shut.

One of these doors—the last on the right—is always

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Part I, c. ii, p. 61), and his reasoning runs thus: If indulgences were in themselves independent of the sinner's satisfaction (which was his adversaries' statement), they would liberate the sinner from all pain, hence their suspension during the Jubilee year would be an incomparable evil. Now the Church cannot deprive us of such great good, otherwise the Jubilee year would rather be a year of mourning; hence the indulgence is not the good it was assumed—*i.e.*, it does not liberate us from the necessity of satisfaction. We have explained elsewhere how indulgences do not make void satisfaction: first, they do not dispense us from practising that spirit of abnegation which is an essential condition for avoiding future sins; secondly, as they are a stimulus to love Christ more and more, they naturally incite us to follow his example and carry our cross. See Card. Lépicier, tr. de *Indulgentiis* (*De Poenit.*, art. 7, p. 536).

walled up between the periods of Jubilee. When the Pope comes close to it, he strikes it three times with a silver hammer, chanting these words, "Aperite mihi portas justitiæ—open to me the doors of justice."<sup>1</sup> After this the Cardinal Penitentiary also strikes the door, but only twice.

Then the door, which has previously been detached from its fastenings to the wall, is carried away by the workmen of the Basilica, called *sanpietrini*. The penitentiaries of the Vatican wash the threshold; and the Pope, holding a lighted taper in his left hand, enters first into the church, followed by the Sacred College in white vestments and by the rest forming the procession.

An analogous ceremony takes place at the three other Patriarchal Basilicas, whose doors have been shut beforehand. At St Paul's it is performed by the Cardinal Dean; at St John Lateran and Sta Maria Maggiore by the Cardinal Archpriests of those churches respectively.<sup>2</sup>

When the "holy year" is coming to an end, the Pope proclaims the closing of the "holy door" a little before Christmas Eve, just as he had proclaimed its opening on Ascension Day of the year before.

This closing ceremony is, so to speak, the counterpart of the former one, and is also performed by the Pope himself at St Peter's and by the Cardinals at the other Basilicas. The procession is the same; but in the porch the Pope begins by spreading a little mortar

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxvii 19.

<sup>2</sup> On the first ceremonies of the opening of the "Porta Santa" see the interesting article, "La Tradizione delle Porte Sante," in the *Civiltà Cattolica*, February 17, 1900; H. Thurston, "The Year of Jubilee," etc., *Month*, December, 1899; Wiseman, *Recollections of the Last Four Popes*, p. 270; Ushaw Magazine, March, 1900, contains an interesting eye-witness's account of the opening ceremony in the Jubilee of 1900.

on the threshold of the Holy Door with a silver trowel. He places on this three stones and some coins, struck in memory of the Jubilee of that year; and then the masons wall up the door again, to remain closed until the time of the next Jubilee.

12. Captious critics may see nothing in this ceremony but a kind of theatrical incident, meant to relieve the monotony of a Jubilee;<sup>1</sup> but the Catholic Christian knows it to be an act full of touching symbolism. "The Holy Door," says a recent author,<sup>2</sup> "is on the right of the church, and the baptismal fonts on the left, in token of the two entrances into heaven provided for man. Baptism is the first, and a man can pass through it but once in his life; penance is the second, and, thanks to the mercy of God, this entrance is never irrevocably closed. The Holy Door is opened on Christmas Day, which is truly a day of indulgence and of pardon. It is reserved for the Pope, as representing our Saviour, to have the privilege of opening it and the honour of first crossing its threshold. A hammer, instead of keys, is used for the ceremony, because a door opened by keys is a permanent one, and can be locked again, whilst a door, opened by a hammer, is demolished and leaves a free passage for every one."

Amort<sup>3</sup> sees in this ceremony a reminder of the admission of penitents, in ancient times, to the inside of the church after they had spent their appointed time of banishment from the assembly of the faithful. They had to come and beg to be let in, when the door was opened for them amid the rejoicings of all around.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is how Mr. Lea writes on the subject: "It was apparently expected to be an attractive feature of the ceremony" (*op. cit.*, p. 210).

<sup>2</sup> *Le Catéchisme en Exemples*, III partie, ch. viii.

<sup>3</sup> *De Origine*, etc, Part I, p. 124, col. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See Part II, c. i, p. 167 of this work.

Of the Jubilees that followed that of Alexander VI, we will give special mention to four only: to those of 1550, 1575, 1600 and 1700.

13. The first of these, promulgated by Paul III, and kept by his successor, Julius III, who opened the Holy Door on February 22, two days after his coronation, was much frequented. What made it chiefly remarkable was the presence in Rome of several of the principal saints of the time, especially of St Ignatius, then developing his newly born society; of St Francis Borgia, who had given up all his worldly prospects to enrol himself in that same society; and of St Philip Neri, the Apostle of Rome.

It is to the latter's efforts on this occasion that the founding of what became afterwards the celebrated confraternity, called *dei Pellegrini*, was due. It was at first only a small house for the reception of poor pilgrims, who needed help; but it developed in the course of time into a large institution, many of whose members reached a high degree of sanctity. It is related of a cook of the establishment that often, going out at night to gaze at the stars, he was sweetly rapt into ecstasy.<sup>1</sup>

14. The Jubilee of 1575 was proclaimed and celebrated by Gregory XIII, and was even more solemn and more largely attended than the previous one.<sup>2</sup> The Pope opened the Holy Door on Christmas Eve in presence of a multitude of about 300,000 persons, whilst almost equally large crowds assembled at the three other Basilicas. The fifty penitentiaries appointed to hear confessions at St Peter's were so besieged by penitents that people had sometimes to wait six or eight days for their turn; and yet there were no

<sup>1</sup> P. G. Bacci, *Vita di San Filippo Neri*, pp. 18, *sqq.* Roma, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> See L. A. Muratori, *Annali d'Italia*, 1575, Roma, 1788, t. x, Part II, p. 292.

less than thirty penitentiaries at St John Lateran, the same number at St Mary Major, and nearly as many at St Paul's.

This Jubilee, like the preceding ones, attracted to Rome a number of distinguished and saintly personages, among whom must be mentioned St Charles Borromeo and St Alexander Sauli, the latter of whom was not many years ago canonised by Pius X.

These two holy men, who were wonderfully made to understand and appreciate each other, had long since been linked by the closest bonds of friendship. St Alexander, after having been the counsellor and helpmate of St Charles in the arduous task of administering and reforming the important archdiocese of Milan, was himself, notwithstanding his repugnance, destined by the Pope to rule the diocese of Aleria in Corsica, which for many years had abandoned the practice of religion almost entirely. With his apostolic zeal he succeeded in promoting the spiritual welfare of his people according to the prescriptions of the Council of Trent, with results similar to those already obtained at Milan by St Charles.

These two Bishops, then, came to Rome from their respective dioceses to gain the indulgence of the Jubilee of 1575. There they visited with great devotion the ancient Basilicas and also the pious shrines which abound in the Capital of the Catholic world, and which have ever been a source of attraction for every true son of the Church.

It happened that on the last day of the Carnival Pope Gregory XIII made the stations of the Seven Churches, together with a great number of Cardinals and prelates, among whom was St Alexander Sauli. As the pontifical cortège reached the Basilica of St Lawrence outside the Walls, it met with a throng of devout people whom St Philip Neri had led that day



to the church, to withdraw them from the profane festivities of the Carnival. The Pope then asked St Philip if there was any one present who could preach an edifying sermon to the congregated multitude. "There is one," answered the saint, "who can satisfy the wish of your Holiness, and that is the Bishop of Aleria." "Let him preach, then," replied the Pope: and history tells us that St Alexander did so with great unction, so that all were forced to admire his zeal and piety.<sup>1</sup>

Another illustrious pilgrim was the poet Tasso, the author of the *Gerusalemme liberata*, who, mixed with the crowd of pilgrims, performed the prescribed visits with the marks of true devotion.

The confraternity spoken of above, which later was called *della SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini*, on account of its having been transferred to the church of that name near the *Ponte Sisto*, did immense service during this Jubilee. The registers speak of 144,963 pilgrims as having been sheltered there, and of 21,000 as having been nursed in the hospital connected with the work. Other associations, too, were formed for the same purposes, and many private houses and palaces were thrown open to strangers, whilst some of the highest nobility of Rome counted it an honour to wait on the pilgrims at table and to wash their weary feet.<sup>2</sup>

15. The Jubilee of 1600 was noted both for the works of devotion which Clement VIII himself per-

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Tranquillino Molledo, *Vita di S. Alessandr. Sauli*, pp. 292 sqq., Napoli, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Lea, who records the above details, makes them the occasion of suggesting ill-natured intentions on the part of the Church of Rome. He argues that the latter, being no longer able to speculate with the gold of the pilgrims, must have speculated on their submission, so as to increase her spiritual influence. "The time for speculating on the pilgrims was past, and the accumulation, not of money, but of spiritual influence, was henceforth to be the object of the Holy See."—*Op. cit.*, p. 215.

formed for the edification of his people, and for the eagerness of the faithful to follow his example.

In 1592 the Pope, moved by private devotion, had instituted the custom of the "Forty Hours," which was to be practised in all the churches of the city in turn, and had enriched it with indulgences.<sup>1</sup> Now, during the Jubilee, he desired, as being *the Servant of the servants of God*, to help the pilgrims personally. First, he set apart a sum of 300,000 crowns for their needs; and then, in spite of his own infirmities, he made it his duty himself to wash their feet, to wait upon them, to hear their confessions, and to say Mass for their special benefit.

His example had a great effect. It was followed by the conversion of several heretics, and caused the pilgrims, who beheld his humility and self-sacrifice, to perform the Jubilee devotions with such extraordinary fervour, that some among them even fell ill and died from over-exertion. In short, to sum up in the words of the learned Cardinal Augustine Valerio, who was present in Rome during that time, "it offered a spectacle of faith, piety, and brotherly love—the fruits of the Jubilee—that could not be described."<sup>2</sup>

16. The Jubilee of 1700 has this peculiar feature, that one Pope inaugurated it, and another closed it. Innocent XII, of the family of the Pignatelli de Spinazzola—a Pontiff specially remarkable for his horror of nepotism and for his restoration of ecclesiastical discipline—published on May 28, 1699, the Bull *Regi saeculorum*, in which he invited all the faithful of the Christian world to profit by the Jubilee. Prevented by illness from opening the "Holy Door"

<sup>1</sup> Const. *Graves et diuturnae*, November 25, 1592.

<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Augustine Valerio, eyewitness of Gregory XIII's piety at the Jubilee of 1575, wrote the history of Clement VIII's Jubilee, with the title, *De sacro Anno Jubilaei*, 1600, Veronae, 1601

himself, he commissioned a Frenchman, Cardinal de la Tour de Bouillon, to do it in his name. He visited the Basilicas with great devotion as soon as he was well enough. But, his illness taking a fatal turn, he gave up his soul to God on September 27 of the same year, in a disposition of singular piety and deep humility.

His successor, Pope Clement XI, of the family of the Albani d'Urbino, a worthy imitator of Innocent XII in suppressing nepotism and reforming the clergy, emulated him also in his pious mode of carrying on the Jubilee. On the feast of St Thomas, December 21, accompanied by twenty-two Cardinals, he washed the pilgrims' feet at the Trinità dei Pellegrini, served them at table, and presented the institution with four hundred crowns.<sup>1</sup> On Christmas Eve he brought the Jubilee year to an end by closing the Holy Door as usual.

There is no need to treat in detail of the Jubilees that have been periodically celebrated since the above date, since they all presented very much the same features and ended with the same results.<sup>2</sup> It will be better to say a few words about what historians have agreed to call "extraordinary" and "extended" Jubilees respectively.

17. Extraordinary Jubilees are those granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs to the whole world, under peculiar circumstances or on the occasion of special events; or, again, to certain appointed places or countries.

Examples of the first kind are found in the Jubilees granted by Popes on their own accession to St Peter's Chair, in order to obtain from God the special graces needed for their pontificate. The first Pope to do this was Sixtus V, who, on his election, granted a Jubilee

<sup>1</sup> Prinzivalli, *Gli Anni Santi*, p. 149, Roma, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> On the documents relating to such Jubilees, and to others of less importance, see Amort, *op. cit.*, Part I, sect iii.

of fifteen days, first to Rome and then to the whole Catholic world. His example has been followed by most of his successors.

To the same category belong the Jubilees that the Sovereign Pontiffs have sometimes promulgated, when needing some particular help from God under exceptionally important circumstances. For instance, in the year 1560, Pius IV proclaimed a universal Jubilee to draw down the divine blessing on the Council of Trent, then resuming its work after an interruption of eight years. In 1566 St Pius V published an extraordinary Jubilee to stem the spread of heresy and the threatening advance of the Turks.<sup>1</sup> Again, to take more recent examples, Pius IX announced a universal Jubilee in 1869, as a preparation for the Vatican Council; and Leo XIII in his turn granted two extraordinary Jubilees within the early years of his pontificate—one in March, 1881, to obtain special helps against serious evils then troubling the Church;<sup>2</sup> the other in December, 1885, to call down the divine blessing through the intercession of Mary invoked as “Queen of the most holy Rosary.”<sup>3</sup> Pius X granted extraordinary Jubilees on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Definition of the Immaculate Conception, and in 1913 in commemoration of the peace of Constantine.

As examples of Jubilees granted to particular places, we may cite, first, the one enjoyed by the Church of Lyons every time that St John the Baptist's Day falls on the feast of Corpus Christi, a coincidence which only happens when Easter comes at its latest possible date, April 25. Such, again, is the Jubilee celebrated

<sup>1</sup> Amort, p. i, 103. See Bullar. Sixti V, ii, 526, *Virium nostrarum*.

<sup>2</sup> Bull *Militans Jesu Christi Ecclesia*, March 12, 1881.

<sup>3</sup> Bull *Quod Auctoritate*, December 22, 1886.

at Compostella whenever St James's feast falls on a Sunday.<sup>1</sup>

Most frequently, however, these limited Jubilees are granted under peculiar circumstances and for once only. Thus, in 1599, Clement VIII granted, to the city of Rome only, a special Jubilee to obtain the cessation of an extraordinary flood caused by the overflow of the Tiber, which had caused much damage and many sad calamities.<sup>2</sup>

18. Besides "Extraordinary" Jubilees there are *extended* Jubilees, whose origin is due to Clement VI.

The indulgence for the Jubilee of 1300 had been granted only to those who should come to Rome in person, to visit the tombs of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul. But on occasion of the following Jubilee of 1350, many princes—among others the Kings of Aragon, Portugal, and Cyprus, and the Duke of Austria—being prevented from going to Rome, begged the Pope to grant them the favour of being allowed to gain this solemn pardon in some other way. The Pope submitted the request to the Cardinals for examination. He afterwards sent an answer to Hugh, King of Cyprus, saying that as the indulgence had been granted not only for the salvation of souls, but with a view to honouring the saints, he could not agree to its being gained on any other condition but that of visiting the churches appointed.

However, in the following year, the favour was granted to Hugh and some other princes nevertheless. The Pope further authorised John, Archbishop of Brindisi, and internuncio in Sicily, to grant the Jubilee indulgence to thirty persons, provided that they had fully intended coming to Rome themselves, and had been lawfully hindered. An equivalent of the sum

<sup>1</sup> See Zaccaria, *Dell' Anno Santo*, i, 9.

<sup>2</sup> See Amort, *op. cit.*, Part I, sect. iii, n. 36.



which they might have spent on the journey was to be employed in propagation of the faith and other good works, as should be ordained by the Sovereign Pontiff.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the fourteenth century dispensations from going to Rome for the Jubilee indulgence were granted more frequently. In 1391 Boniface IX had already granted the plenary indulgence to the inhabitants of Munich and of Cologne, as though they had gone to Rome, and for the whole year. The conditions for gaining it were to visit certain churches, and to give an alms towards the war against the Turks. The following year the Pope extended the same privilege to the town of Magdeburg, and afterwards to Meissen and to Prague.

In 1500 Alexander VI extended the Jubilee to all the faithful beyond Rome, on condition that an alms should be given for the needs of the Church. It would be difficult to recall all the invectives uttered by Protestants against the Pope and the Church of Rome on account of sums thus collected. It seems incredible that men who look upon Holy Scripture as their sole rule of faith should so ignore St Paul's words: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap your carnal things?"<sup>2</sup> And indeed they have forgotten them to the point of deplorably falsifying history, either by attributing to the Popes motives that they never had, or by exaggerating the sums received, or by misrepresenting the purposes to which such alms were applied.

Ever since the days of Alexander VI the Popes have followed the custom of extending the Jubilee indulgence by a special Bull to the whole Catholic universe, for a longer or shorter period. It usually belongs to the respective Ordinaries to promulgate the "Bull of Extension," to fix the exact time for the Jubilee in

<sup>1</sup> See Raynaldi, A.D. 1350.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ix 11.

each place and to state the conditions for gaining it. Pius IX, however, departed from this custom when, in 1875, he decreed that the Jubilee might be simultaneously gained all over the world, as circumstances then hindered the faithful from making a pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles. The Popes may, of course, impose an alms as one condition of gaining a Jubilee; but, since Alexander VI, they have refrained from doing so in order to avoid the least suspicion of any mercenary intention in granting indulgences.

19. We have seen that, on the occasion of Jubilees, the custom was to expose the "Veronica" for veneration. But what was this relic of which medieval sacred historians so often speak? A word of explanation may here be welcomed.

The name of "Veronica"<sup>1</sup> is given to the veil, or handkerchief, with which a certain holy woman is said to have wiped the face of Jesus when, according to a devout tradition, he fell under the weight of the cross on his way to Calvary. The Divine features remained miraculously printed on this cloth, which thus became a lasting memorial of the Redeemer's sacred Face.

The early history of this holy relic is surrounded with so great mystery that it is impossible to say precisely when it was brought to Rome and in what church it was first venerated there. If we possessed the earliest documents of the Roman Church, and if we had the archives that Pope St Damasus had drawn up when he built the Church at St Lawrence, near Pompey's Theatre, we might perhaps trace the origin of this ancient devotion with that of many others. But, by permitting the early documents to be scattered, first

<sup>1</sup> From two words, one Latin, the other Greek, "*vera εἰκών*—true image"; or else from Berenice, said to have been the name of the woman to whom we owe the relic. This latter name, in its turn, is formed of two Greek words: *φέρω*, "I bring," *νίκη*, "victory."

by the tyrant Diocletian and afterwards by Robert Guiscard's Normans, and the archives to be almost entirely lost,<sup>1</sup> God has given us a fresh means of exercising our faith in the origins of Christian traditions, and thereby increasing our merit.

The first historical mention of the valuable relic dates back to Pope John VIII. Towards the year 705, that Pope built in St Peter's a chapel called *of the crib*, in which he placed an image of the Mother of God, and beneath it the inscription:

IOHANNES . INDIGNVS . EPISCOPVS . FECIT  
B . DEI . GENITRICIS . SERVVS

Opposite this chapel the same Pope dedicated an altar adorned with marbles and mosaics to the *Veronica*, which became a favourite centre of pilgrimages, and gave its own name to a special chapel, eventually "the Chapel of the *Veronica*."<sup>2</sup> The holy cloth was transferred thence to the new Basilica of St Peter's, under Paul V (A.D. 1605-1621), when it was placed in the tribune above the statue of St Veronica, with the Holy Lance and a fragment of the true Cross.

About the beginning of the thirteenth century Pope Innocent III granted an indulgence of ten days to all who said the prayer of St Veronica.<sup>3</sup> His successor,

<sup>1</sup> See C. Sayle, *The Vatican Library*, passim, Cambridge, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Armellini, *Le Chiese di Roma*, Part II, xiv, pp. 722 sqq., Rome, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> Potthast, vol i., p. 450, ann. 1216, m. Jul.; Matt. Paris, *Hist. Major.*, ann. 1216, 290; Innocent, pp. iii, *Regest.* x, 179; *Gesta*, n. 144; *Bullar. Vatican.* i, 90, 110, 133. The assertion of Matthew Paris that the motive which led Innocent III to compose this prayer was the wish to avert future evils, foretold by the fact of the Veronica turning itself upside down as it was being carried to its place of deposit, is by grave authors looked upon as a mere fable. See Amort, Part I, p. 191. The prayer reads thus: "Oremus. Deus qui nobis signatis lumine vultus tui memoriale tuum ad instantiam Veronicæ sudario impressam imaginem relinquere voluisti, per passionem et crucem tuam tribue nobis,

Honorius III, granted a year's indulgence to the members of the Confraternity of the Holy Ghost, "in honour of the effigy of Christ preserved in the Basilica of St Peter." This was in connexion with a procession to the Church of that Confraternity, on the Sunday after the octave of the Epiphany, in which the relic was solemnly carried. Succeeding Popes increased the indulgences, and two among them, John XXII and Clement VI, even wrote indulgenced prayers in honour of the "Veronica."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, from the earliest days this holy relic has been the object of special devotion, rich and poor alike feeling impelled to go and visit the shrine where they could gaze on the impression of their Saviour's features.<sup>2</sup> The Sovereign Pontiffs have often allowed the "Veronica" to be publicly exposed at other times than that of a Jubilee, and now and then have even let Kings and other great personages see it privately on special occasions. It is now publicly offered for veneration, with the other "major relics" on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday in Holy Week, as well as on a few other occasions during the year.

quaesumus, ut ita nunc in terris per speculum et in enigmate ipsam adorare et venerari valeamus, ut facie ad faciem venientem judicem te securi videamus, qui vivis et regnas cum Deo Patre," etc.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Devotion of the Holy Face of our Lord*, London, Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1895.

<sup>2</sup> The popularity of this devotion is well shown by Dante's verses referred to above (n. 4), in which he takes the wonder of the devout pilgrim, gazing for the first time on the Veronica, as an illustration of the wonder he himself experienced in being contrasted with the great Doctor St Bernard. Later, painters who used to copy the Veronica for the devotion of the faithful came to form a class by themselves. They were called *Pictores Veronicarum*. The English popular rendering for Veronica was *Vernicle*, as is shown by this passage in Chaucer: "A Vernicle hadde he sowed upon his cappe."—*The Canterbury Tales*, the Prologue, 685, ed. W. Skeat, Oxford, 1895.

No one, however, can see the Holy Face quite close on such occasions except the canons of St Peter's, who alone have the right to mount to the place where it is kept and to touch it. Now and then an exception has been made to this rule in favour of certain illustrious laymen, who have actually been made " honorary canons " for this express purpose. This was the case, for instance, at the Jubilee of 1700, when the Pope allowed Cosmo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany, to see and touch the Holy Face after receiving the above rank. He had to put on the canon's dress: a long purple cassock, a rochet, surplice, red gloves, and biretta; and in this costume he first mounted to the balcony where the Relic was kept, to look at it himself, and then took it into his own hands to bless the people below with it.<sup>1</sup>

Although several well-authenticated miracles have proved the veneration paid to the Veronica to be pleasing to God,<sup>2</sup> and although the devotion has considerably developed in these latter days, with the full consent of the Church, we nevertheless are inclined to believe that the origin of this holy Relic is destined to remain a mystery to the end of time.

According to a tradition which the practice known as the " Way of the Cross " seems to confirm, a holy woman pushed through the crowd that was following our Lord to Calvary, and, moved with compassion,

<sup>1</sup> Prinzivalli, *Gli Anni Santi*, pp. 118, 149, Roma, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> One of the most striking miracles took place in 1849, when Pius IX was an exile at Gaeta. Whilst the holy Relic was being exhibited at St Peter's, our Lord's face suddenly appeared surrounded by an extraordinary splendour, his features having the death pallor of a corpse, with sunken eyes and an expression of severity. It remained so for three hours, causing naturally a great excitement among the people who had flocked to see it.—On the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face, in which a holy man of Tours, named Dupont, played a prominent part, see Beringer, vol. i, p. 116.



wiped off the blood that was pouring down his face. There is nothing improbable in this, as the Gospel tells us of the crowd that followed him, men and women "bewailing and lamenting him."<sup>1</sup>

But another account of this sacred handkerchief, or *sudarium*, is given by Peter Mallius, a canon of St Peter's in the time of Alexander III, and by Peter the Deacon, a monk of Monte Cassino in the twelfth century,<sup>2</sup> who both say that it is the very one used by our Lord to wipe his sacred Face with, after the bloody sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane. And again there is nothing to disprove another belief about this veil—*i.e.*, that it may have been the shroud in which our Lord was wrapped in the tomb, of which mention is made in the twentieth chapter of St John's Gospel.

If either of these suppositions be true, we must entirely abandon any attempt to identify the woman who is supposed to have wiped our Lord's face on the way to Calvary, with the woman mentioned in St Matthew,<sup>3</sup> who was healed by the touch of our Lord's garment, and who is said to have erected a bronze statue, in remembrance of the miracle, before her house, at Cæsarea Philippi.<sup>4</sup> In this case we would have to assume that the woman ordinarily called Veronica existed only in the imagination of painters who, when representing the holy Face, would have the veil held by an angel and sometimes by a woman according to their own devotion or fancy.

20. Among the ceremonies that serve to heighten the solemnity of Jubilee festivities, one of those best expressing the spirit of penance intended to be called

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiii 27.

<sup>2</sup> Mabillon, *Musæum Italic.*, t. i; *Iter Ital.*, September, 1685. Paris, 1724.

<sup>3</sup> Matt ix 20.

<sup>4</sup> Mentioned by Eusebius, H. E., Book VII, c. xviii, and Sozomen, H. E., Book V, c. xxi.

forth by the "Holy Year" is the celebrated procession of the holy Crucifix preserved in the church of St Marcellus at Rome.<sup>1</sup> This Crucifix is one of the most precious treasures of the Eternal City, and the miracles that have been worked in connexion with it have caused the Roman people to have frequent recourse to it on occasion of public calamities.<sup>2</sup> It is also the centre of an archconfraternity, to which several others are affiliated throughout the world.

It is not known exactly when the pious custom of carrying this Crucifix in procession began, but we know that it never took place except with extraordinary pomp and crowded attendance. It was on Maundy Thursday, at nightfall, that the sacred trophy was carried from St Marcellus to the Vatican Basilica. To allow the procession to go round the streets, palisades had to be erected the whole way along to keep off the crowd, the soldiers not being sufficient to do this.<sup>3</sup> The Crucifix was exposed in the Basilica all night; and on Good Friday the great procession took place inside the Basilica. Besides the Archconfraternity of the Holy Crucifix with other confraternities, all the Servite Fathers and many prelates and members of the Roman aristocracy joined in it. On the same evening the Crucifix was solemnly carried back to the Church of St Marcellus.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This church has been under the care of the Servite Fathers ever since 1370.

<sup>2</sup> See *Annal. Ord. Serv. B.M.V.*, Cent. III, l. VI, p. 77, Lucca, 1721.

<sup>3</sup> Prinzivalli, *Gli Anni Santi*, p. 153, Roma, 1899.

<sup>4</sup> *Annal. Ord. Serv. B.M.V.*, Cent. V, p. 410, Lucca, 1726.

## CHAPTER VII

### USE AND ABUSE

#### *A Retrospective Survey*

“For what if some of them have not believed? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid. But God is true; and every man a liar.”—*Rom. iii 3, 4.*

Relation of indulgences to Catholic dogma—To the invocation of saints—To the usefulness of good works—To the temporal good of society—To Pontifical supremacy—To the Real Presence—To the Immaculate Conception—To Purgatory—Abuse of indulgences—Triple accusation—Indulgences granted for alms—They have not been a cause of deception—Compensation—Tendency to exaggeration—Apocryphal indulgences—These condemned by the Church—The Church reproves the errors of preachers—Abuses of the *Quaestores* or *Quaestuarii*—Their office abolished—Authenticity of indulgences—Indulgences of a great many years.

EVERY work of God has an end appointed by his wisdom. Each creation or each production is not intended merely to satisfy human curiosity. All is made to serve for man's sanctification and to promote the glory of the Creator. Now all men are called to be members of the Church of Christ; and, therefore, all the works of God must minister to the good of that Church, “to the edification of the Body of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

As indulgences are a divine institution, then, they must have a special end; and we propose, in this

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. iv 12.

chapter, to consider what that end is, and what particular influence indulgences have had in the Church from the period when they first became an important part of ecclesiastical discipline until the time of the Reformation.

But we must look at their institution (as at all divine institutions entrusted to man's administration) under a double aspect, the divine and the human. The first, like all works of God, contains a principle of life, grace, and perfection; the second, a principle of imperfection, decay, and death. For it almost seems impossible for mankind to use things created by God without sully-ing their beauty or weakening their vigour. We shall treat, in the present chapter, of the abuse, as well as of the rightful use, of indulgences in the Church.

In the first place we may consider the divine aspect of the institution. To be sincere, we are bound to acknowledge that hardly any religious practice of the Middle Ages throws so much light on Christian dogma as this one does. For, as we have seen, the very notion of an indulgence flows from the doctrine of the malice of sin and its consequences, and it equally implies belief in the applicability of merits and of good works, and in the communion of saints. These dogmas are so closely allied that denial of one necessarily involves denial of the others, just as, by pulling out one stone, we may bring down an entire building. We shall see in the next chapter how, as a matter of fact, Luther was logically induced, by his denial of indulgences, to give up all the above-named articles of our faith.

At the time which we have just been considering, God seems to have ordained that indulgences should be a confirmation of those very points of doctrine which were being most violently attacked by contemporary heretics or which were destined to meet with more furious opposition later on.

2. There is hardly any belief dearer to a Christian heart than the invocation of Saints and the honour due to their images and relics. At the beginning of the fifth century the heretic Vigilantius had attacked both these doctrines, holding that the sacred remains of God's servants were nothing more than dust and ashes. St Jerome wrote a treatise against him, in which he denounced his opposition as contrary to faith and reason. In the twelfth century the same errors were revived by the Waldenses; but it was reserved for the "reformers" of the sixteenth century to make the most furious attacks upon this venerable practice and to renew the excesses of Eastern iconoclasts.

All these heretics chose to ignore both the ancient and uninterrupted tradition of the Church, as to the saints' intercession, and all those grounds upon which our faith in that intercession is founded. They refused to recognise that the honour done to God's servants redounds only to his own glory; that images are merely a reminder of the saints themselves;<sup>1</sup> and that the preservation of their relics is a natural mark of respect to holy bodies destined to be rejoined to holy souls.

Now the very act of granting indulgences on such occasions as the erection or consecration of churches dedicated to the saints, or the translation of their relics, or the announcement of their canonisation, or the undertaking of some pilgrimage to their shrines, is in itself a powerful witness to the truth of the Catholic doctrine of the invocation of saints, devotion to their images, and veneration of their relics. For the grants of indulgences, in these connexions, are constantly referred to the merits and intercession of the saints and presuppose intercommunion between the Churches—militant, suffering and triumphant. Heretics also

<sup>1</sup> Conc. *ibid.* Sess XXV, Decret. de Invocatione, etc.



seem to have understood this; for, in the very same article<sup>1</sup> in which they rejected indulgences, they also declared the invocation of saints and the paying of honour to their images and relics to be against Scripture.

3. But the honour paid to saints is not intended by the Church to stop short at admiration, and thus to remain a sterile doctrine. She desires her children to become active followers of the virtues of these holy men and women both in doing and suffering, and to ask of God, through their intercession, the grace necessary for this very purpose.

Hence those who reject with indulgences the invocation of the saints are on the high road to denying the efficacy of good works. They exaggerate what St Paul in his Epistle to the Romans says as to the value of faith. They confound that faith, which is enkindled by charity and which makes man capable of acts that merit salvation, of which the Apostle speaks, with a barren faith incapable of causing justification, and they pretend that "voluntary works over and above God's commandments, which [we call] works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety."<sup>2</sup> They declare that God's law is perfect, and that it includes all possible good works, and that therefore it is impossible to do anything above or beyond that law.

But this, like other similar reasoning, is merely a sophistry. The law of God is perfect in this sense, that everything contained in it leads to perfection; but not in the sense of the converse—*i.e.*, that everything that leads to perfection is contained in it. Along with the commandments we have the "counsels," of which our Lord himself has said that "all men take not this word, but they to whom it is given";<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Art. xxii.

<sup>2</sup> See the Thirty-nine Articles, Article xiv.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xix 11.

these counsels are "above and beyond" the commandments, leading man much higher than the law alone can do.

As regards the fulfilment of the law, indulgences proved a powerful means of rousing Christians from the moral lethargy into which human nature is prone to fall, and thus of preventing them from transgressing God's law. They stimulated men to good works and to obedience to the commandments of God and of the Church. The hope of sharing in the spiritual treasure of pardons induced the faithful to fulfil the precepts of prayer, alms and fasting, and led them moreover to put an end to civil wars and to become solemnly reconciled to persons with whom they were at mortal enmity.

But indulgences did more than this: they encouraged the faithful, as we have seen, to perform works of charity which they were not otherwise bound to do. Thus they urged them on to face death itself in a holy cause. They caused the children of the Church to share their goods with the poor in obedience to the Evangelical counsel,<sup>1</sup> to raise innumerable buildings for the worship of God, to found asylums for Christ's suffering members, to observe feast-days devoutly, and to spend much time in fervent prayer. In short, every possible moral and spiritual activity was promoted by indulgences.

4. There is yet another side to the Church's interest in her children. She cares for their temporal as well as for their spiritual well-being, though in opposition to modern views on the subject she would have the temporal subordinate to the spiritual. The Church always used her powers to promote, side by side with the spiritual good of men, also their material welfare.

<sup>1</sup> See Isa. lviii 7, and compare with this the Gospel words in Matt. xxv 35, 36.

Whilst she dethroned princes who had oppressed their subjects, excommunicated usurers, and punished unfaithful husbands or wives, she made use of the sacred treasure of indulgences to bring about the spirit of brotherly love, which can alone ensure the temporal welfare of man.

Again, the Church made use of indulgences for a philanthropic purpose of a practical kind, whose importance we can hardly estimate in our days of easy locomotion. She granted them in return for the construction of roads and bridges, to form means of communication between one place and another.<sup>1</sup> She turned them also to the beneficent purpose of restraining the violent passions that led to so much bloodshed among the nobles in the Middle Ages, by establishing what was called "the truce of God," to which many spiritual promises were attached.<sup>2</sup> By the same means also she gathered the people into those "companies" or confraternities, many of which still exist and which are among the most interesting institutions of medievalism.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Amort, *op. cit.*, Part II, sect. ii, pp. 32, 33, n. iv; Potthast, n. 3799. *Indulgences as a Social Factor in the Middle Ages*, by N. Paulus, trs. by J. E. Ross, New York, 1921.

<sup>2</sup> As early as 1054 we find the Council of Narbonne, in its desire to enforce the truce of God, calling down Christ's everlasting blessing and the inheritance of eternal life on those who shall faithfully observe it (Harduin, t. vi, I, Conc. Narbonn. a. 1054, c. iv). Sometimes, also, full pardon of all confessed sins was granted to such as were slain by their enemies while observing the truce of God.

<sup>3</sup> These are the celebrated *geldoniae* or *gildae* (our "guilds") also called *confratriae*. We may safely assume that their institution was first suggested by the example of the collegia of Rome. The first Christians would naturally group themselves in reunions of this kind, either to help each other or as a means of defence against the heathen. In any case, the origin of these confraternities is very ancient in the Church, and the Sovereign Pontiffs have been pleased to enrich them with numerous indulgences (*cf.* Amort, *op. cit.*, Part I, sect. vi), and to help them by large grants of money.

The philanthropic works, for the promotion of which the Church drew upon her spiritual treasure, are too numerous to describe in detail. Suffice it to say that every institution set up to meet some form or other of human need—educational, physical and moral—was encouraged by indulgences. Protecting orphans and widows, assisting the sick, visiting prisoners, teaching the youth, redeeming slaves, propagating the faith, harbouring the roofless; these and similar works of charity were rewarded and promoted by indulgences. Even to those unfortunate creatures who had reviled their dignity by becoming for their neighbour an occasion of sin, the Church extended her maternal solicitude through means of indulgences. To such as would have drawn them from the abyss of vice by marrying them, ten days' indulgence were granted by Innocent III.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Amort, Part I, p. 190. In several passages of his work (see pp. 188, 189, 462, 482, 495, 534, etc.), Mr. Lea insists on the fact that indulgences were not granted for works of charity as they were for works of devotion, meaning to imply thereby that the Church cared more for promoting among the faithful a propension to pious practices than an interest in beneficial works. But this is a false insinuation that must be repelled. To begin with, it is not logical to divide "works of charity and works of devotion" into two opposite categories. Charity does not exclude devotion, and genuine devotion is never separated from charity; therefore every true work of charity is at the same time a work of devotion. But, taking "charity" to mean what is done for our neighbour's benefit and "devotion" to mean prayers addressed to God, it is not difficult to explain in an obvious manner why the latter should have been more favoured by concessions of indulgences than the former. The proper end of the Church is supernatural: it regards the love of God and his reign in our souls. It is therefore quite natural to expect that, in dispensing her spiritual treasures, the Church should put this object first, and that, after having incited the faithful to the practice of all kinds of charitable actions, she should remind them of the only necessary thing—*unum necessarium*—by multiplying opportunities of obtaining pardons through devout prayers that foster the love of God. Mr. Lea is scandalised (p. 462) at seeing the contemplative orders as much favoured in the matter of indulgences as the active ones. He for-

5. A time was to come when the powers of hell should direct their attacks against the very cornerstone of the Church, in the person of the Sovereign Pontiff, and should attempt to overthrow divinely-appointed authority and replace order by anarchy.<sup>1</sup> Wyclif and John Huss first declared the Pope to be anti-Christ; Luther afterwards renewed the hateful calumny, and in yet later times the precursors of Jansenism tried to make the Vicar of Christ the tool of a Council.

We venture to say that among the means employed by God to preserve men's faith in the fundamental truth of one supreme authority and to prepare them for the definition of Papal supremacy at the Council of Florence and for that of infallibility at the Vatican Council, the practice of indulgences took high rank. The fact that one man could lawfully grant to the faithful, from out of the treasure of the Church, whatsoever remission he might see good to grant proved him undoubtedly to be the head of that Church. And if he could forbid all careless distribution of the same treasure by his subordinates, it was reasonable to conclude that he alone was its rightful guardian.

Now the Popes were most careful to vindicate their full power of granting indulgences every time that any usurpation of their rights gave them the oppor-

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gets that without the love of God nothing, whether knowledge, or liberality, or sacrifice, or any of the virtues that the world oft-times so greatly admires, is of any value (1 Cor. xiii). To repeat the disciples' inquiry: *Ut quid perditio haec?* (Matt. xxvi 8) with reference to a prayer offered directly to God is nothing short of blasphemy. We must protest against the abuse that Mr. Lea (p. 482) makes of our own words in the first English edition of the present work (p. 340) by citing them in support of his theory. Nothing that we have said favours his view.

<sup>1</sup> There is some truth in Mr. Lea's statement (p. 372) that the principal heresies of the Middle Ages, such as those of the Waldenses, of the Flagellants, of the Wycliffites and Hussites, were inspired by a spirit of anti-sacerdotalism and a wish to supersede all priestly ministrations.



tunity of doing so. The Sovereign Pontiff alone, in fact, independently of all human authority, and with no restriction on earth, has received the keys of the kingdom of heaven—*i.e.*, the power of binding and loosing, whilst the Bishops' authority is subject to that of the Pope. Hence when a Bishop sometimes abused his power, or ventured to use it against the Sovereign Pontiff's prohibition, the latter, as guardian of the divine tradition, thought it his duty to raise his voice in vindication of his supremacy.

This was once done in the case of a prelate who filled one of the most important sees in Christendom.

Incited by a desire of increasing the endowments of his church, or by a mistaken zeal in furthering the devotion of his flock, Henry Chicheley, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the year 1420, had granted (with the consent of his clergy) the Jubilee indulgence to all who should visit his cathedral church on certain days. This was running directly counter to the Pope's supreme authority, who alone up to that time had granted this sort of indulgence—a power fully recognised by such an authoritative English canonist as William Lyndwood.<sup>1</sup> No sooner was Martin V informed of the usurpation, than he appointed two envoys—Martin, Bishop of Trieste, and Master Simon of Teramo—to go and verify the matter and to send him a report of it. When he had heard the detailed facts of the case, he wrote a letter condemning the Archbishop's action, in which he said: "Certain men, filled with presumption against the Apostolic See and the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, to whom alone God has entrusted this power, have tried to construct a false ark of salvation."<sup>2</sup> By this means the Pope, whilst vindicating his full authority in the matter

<sup>1</sup> *Cf. Dict. Nat. Biog.*, vol. iv, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Raynaldi, *Annal. A.D.* 1423, n. 21.

of indulgences, implicitly asserted the supremacy of the Apostolic See over all the Churches of Christendom.

6. Next to the Pope's authority, which gives external unity to the mystic body of the Church through the profession of the same faith, the reception of the same sacraments and the observance of the same commandments, the holy Eucharist is the most powerful bond that keeps the faithful together, giving them as it does internal unity by supplying them with the same food and drink—viz., the sacred Body and Blood of Christ. The Pope is the head, whose duty it is to preside, to govern and to direct; the Eucharist is the heart which diffuses life, health, and strength throughout the entire body. Without the Pope each individual might hold a faith different from that of his neighbour, having no guide but his own judgment. Without the Eucharist a man would have no support but his own individuality; he would be an isolated member, as the trees in an orchard are independent of each other. Hence, this wonderful sacrament has been justly named *synaxis*—Communion.

Towards the middle of the eleventh century, Berengarius presumed to deny the real presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, though he happily made no proselytes. To check the effect of this heresy, the learned Lanfranc wrote his treatise on the Eucharist. In the course of the following centuries Wyclif, Luther, Zwinglius and Calvin all attacked this central dogma of the Church with more success, thus striking a blow at her very heart. But here, again, the practice of indulgences proved one of the most effective means chosen by God for confirming Christian faith in the true presence of Christ on the altar.

The institution of the feast of Corpus Christi by Urban IV, in 1264, is a well-known fact. In the Bull

by which he proclaimed this feast, the Pope did all he possibly could to induce the faithful to celebrate it devoutly, and he drew largely on the treasure of the Church for this purpose, as we learn from St Thomas in his *Office of the Blessed Sacrament*, which he wrote at the Pope's own request.

Here are the words of Urban IV to the prelates: "You will exhort the faithful to prepare for this feast by a sincere confession of their sins, by alms, prayers and other pious exercises, so that they may be in proper dispositions for receiving Holy Communion on that day. The better to induce them to do this, we grant a hundred days' indulgence to those who attend matins on that day, or Mass, or the first or second vespers. For attendance at prime, terce, sext, none and compline forty days' indulgence, and a hundred days for assisting at the whole office throughout the octave. All this is in view of mitigating the penances that may have been imposed upon them."<sup>1</sup> This was a protest against the heresy of Berengarius, and a preservative against future attacks.

Since that time the Church has liberally bestowed her spiritual treasures in return for every kind of homage to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and this not only with the object of increasing devotion in the hearts of the faithful, but also with the further one of publicly professing the worship due to the holy Eucharist. It was for the latter purpose that Urban VI, A.D. 1389, granted a hundred days' indulgence to all who should accompany the Blessed Sacrament when carried to the sick, from the church to the house and back again to the church.

7. Another doctrine that has been often violently

<sup>1</sup> See Concilior. t. xi, p. 817. Cf. Amort, *op. cit.*, Part I, sect. vii, pp. 194, 201. In Germany they still call the octave of Corpus Christi "the week of indulgence," *Ablasswoche*.

attacked by innovators is that of the Blessed Virgin's Immaculate Conception; yet it is a truth closely connected with the Incarnation.

Our Lord took his human flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St Paul tells us that he was "made of a woman";<sup>1</sup> hence Mary is truly his Mother. But if Mary had been conceived in original sin, even though purified after her conception, it would always be true to assert that the source from which the flesh of the Son of God was drawn was a sullied and contaminated one; and he who came to purify man from his faults would not have been free from a certain connexion, even though a distant one, with sin. And if, according to the saying in Proverbs,<sup>2</sup> "the glory of children are their fathers," what glory or honour would Christ have gained from a mother who had, even for a moment, been soiled with sin?

But the sinlessness of the Mother of God, in conception as well as throughout the whole course of her mortal life, is a necessary consequence of that sublime dignity to which she was predestined from all eternity, of being a co-operator with Christ in the work of appeasing the divine Majesty offended by the sins of men. It was necessary that Mary should be without blemish, in order that her mediation might be acceptable to God. As the stain of sin would have prevented Christ from effectually bringing about our reconciliation with the Father, so the presence of original sin in Mary's soul, were it only for a moment, would have made it an object of disgust to the Almighty, and would have been an obstacle to her co-operating with the Saviour in the great work of reconciling mankind with the angry Majesty of an offended God. If Mary was to be Co-redemptrix, she must needs be immaculate in her conception as well as in the whole course of her mortal

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv 4.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xvii 6.

life.<sup>1</sup> Therefore it has always been held within the Church that Mary was conceived without sin; and this belief, transmitted from age to age, has some years back received solemn dogmatic sanction by the infallible definition of the Sovereign Pontiff Pius IX.<sup>2</sup>

In the sixteenth century, the reformers, besides rebelling against the Son, attacked also his Mother, for one is inseparable from the other. In previous ages Nestorius, in denying the unity of person in Christ, had been led to deny Mary's divine maternity. In times nearer to our own, those who questioned the life-giving power of Christ's grace and the sacraments could not acknowledge that almost infinite power of intercession attributed by the Church to the Mother of God. They thought to destroy men's belief in her supernatural office by lowering her to the level of an ordinary woman; and hence they attacked the immaculate purity of her conception in order that they might the more easily impugn the sanctity of her whole life.

But before Luther and Calvin there had been some unauthorised preachers who, whilst professing to be Catholics, had declared belief in Mary's preservation from original sin to be contrary to the glory of God and even to be a heresy, adding that it was a mortal sin to say the office of her Conception, or to hear sermons preached on that occasion.

These propositions met with a formal condemnation, and resulted in causing the Church to extend the feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the whole world. Indulgences soon were granted to sanction the pious belief. In 1476 Sixtus IV

<sup>1</sup> See Card. Lépicier's work, *L'Immacolata, Corredentrice, Mediatrix*, Rome, 1928. See also J. Bittremieux, "De Mediatione universali Beatae Mariae Virginis quoad gratias," Bruges, 1926; *Eph. Theol. Louv.*, vol. iv, p. 5; *Nouvelle Rev. Theol.*, vol. liii, p. 748.

<sup>2</sup> Bull *Ineffabilis*, December 8, 1854.



granted, for the celebration of this feast, the same indulgences as given by Urban IV and Martin V for that of Corpus Christi.<sup>1</sup> Finally, Pius IX, after having, on December 8, 1854, solemnly proclaimed *ex cathedrâ* the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, gladly acknowledged the joyful eagerness with which the faithful received the definition, by attaching rich indulgences to several devout practices in honour of Mary Immaculate.<sup>2</sup> Many of these may be found in the *Raccolta*.

8. The work of the Reformation was one of division and isolation. It was an attempt to separate the nations from Peter, the very centre of Christian life, to deprive the faithful of the bread of angels, and to do away with the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and of the saints, thus leaving mankind with only a sterile faith in the "One Mediator."

There was one thing left to do: to separate the souls in Purgatory from communion with the living, to leave them to their sufferings without any help from their brethren on earth, without any hope of seeing their

<sup>1</sup> See Amort, *op. cit.*, Part I, sect. vii, p. 203, c. 1. See also *Collect. Concil. Labbe*, t. xiii, p. 1442.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Lea (p. 539) says that "the new dogma of the Immaculate Conception . . . was by no means unanimously favoured." On this subject we would observe, first, that the dogma was not new, being as ancient as the Church herself; the definition of it alone was new; secondly, that history bears witness to the fact that the definition was received throughout the Catholic world with unique enthusiasm. The reader may consult the two important volumes published by Mgr. Vincenzo Sardi, under the title, *La solenne Definizione del Dogma dell' Immacolato Concepimento di Maria Santissima, atti e documenti, pubblicati nel cinquantesimo anniversario della stessa definizione*, Roma, 1904, 1905. Besides the full text of all the acts pertaining to the procedure, this work contains an account of the manner in which the Catholic world received the definition (vol. ii, p. 463 *sqq.*) The opinions of some Protestant papers in favour of the definition, which appeared at the time, are also given (*ibid.* p. 252). See also *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, XIX, 61, 147.

pains alleviated, or their time of penance shortened. The reformers hastened to do this by denying the doctrine of Purgatory, just as they had rejected that of indulgences.

But the Catholic teaching, both with regard to the existence of Purgatory and the power which the Church possesses to alleviate the souls in Purgatory, *per modum suffragii*, had already been clearly expressed by Pope Sixtus IV in a Bull dated November 27, 1477, in which he declares that the indulgence may be applied to the dead *per modum suffragii*.<sup>1</sup>

Thus did indulgences act as a barrier against the denial of Purgatory, by the distinct assertion of their relation to the holy souls detained there.

9. Such, then, is the connexion between indulgences and Catholic dogma. But our study of the subject would be incomplete, and we might expose ourselves to the reproach of partiality, were we to keep silence as to the abuses that crept by degrees into this holy institution.

We have already seen how the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries protested against the bad use made by some lax Christians of the letters of recommendation given by the martyrs. In later times the distribu-

<sup>1</sup> Nik. Paulus, *Zeitschrift für kath. Theol.*, 1900, 253. Mention may be made here of a proposition usually attributed to Peter Martinez de Osma, professor of theology in the University of Salamanca, who made himself notorious for his efforts to diminish and even destroy the power of the keys. The proposition runs thus: "Papa non potest indulgere alicui viro poenam purgatorii"; but, as Nik. Paulus clearly shows, the proper reading is *vivo* instead of *viro*; and the proposition does not refer to the souls in Purgatory, but to the living to whom, Peter asserted, the Pope could not remit that temporal penalty due to sin, which otherwise would have to be paid in Purgatory. See *Zeitschrift für kath. Theol.*, 1909, pp. 599 *sqq.* The Bull of Sixtus IV alluded to is of August 9, 1479, and begins with the words "Licet ea." *Bull. Rom.*, t. iii, p. 171, Romae, MDCCXLIII. See also Raynald., *hoc anno*; *Amort*, Part II, p. 12.

tion of indulgences was indeed modified; but human nature always remains the same, and is capable of abusing the very best of God's works.

Unfortunately, this painful aspect of the matter has been so much exaggerated by writers hostile to the Church, that it would appear to be the only thing that has attracted their notice. One would think they must have forgotten to look at the tree, through keeping their gaze fixed on a few damaged fruits that have fallen from it.<sup>1</sup>

Modern invectives against this point of doctrine only reproduce the clamours of the Hussites in 1411, and the calumnies uttered by Ruckhardt of Westphalia against indulgences, who presumed to call them "nothing but pious frauds and a deceitful means of working upon the faithful for profit"; hence, according to this heretic, "it is folly to go to Rome to gain pardons which can be got just as well at home, by means of sincere contrition."<sup>2</sup> This proposition was condemned by Sixtus IV in the year 1479. Might not one believe that the authors of the Thirty-nine Articles had this proposition before them when they formulated the twenty-second Article condemning indulgences as a "fond thing vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God"?

10. The accusations made against indulgences involve a threefold charge: First, that they are not of

<sup>1</sup> A remark here suggests itself. If these authors, and especially Mr. Lea (as the *Tablet* justly observes, in its issue of April 17, 1887, pp. 608, 609), are pretty well acquainted with the abuses, they owe their information for the greater part to the denunciations and condemnations of the Popes themselves or of Catholic theologians. The observation of Bossuet is very much to the point: "The Church has seen the end of all the sects which separated themselves from her bosom in the course of ages. Of many among them the very names would be unknown, unless they were entered in the annals of the Church which conquered them."

<sup>2</sup> Raynald., *Annal.* A.D. 1479, n. 32.

divine origin, but a pure invention of the Church; secondly, that the object of the Church in inventing them was only to lead the faithful into error; and, lastly, that they are mere useless contrivances with no practical result. All these accusations can easily be answered.

First, the power of granting indulgences is, as we have seen, a necessary corollary of the "power of the keys." Our divine Lord's own behaviour towards the adulterous woman and St Paul's towards the incestuous Corinthian are clear proofs of this; and from the very beginning of the Church the Pope and the Bishops have used their power in analogous methods. Therefore we have every right to place indulgences among those practices that owe their existence to the will and institution of Jesus Christ himself.

This being so, it is a sheer absurdity to attribute to the Church, in making use of such a power, the motive of deceiving the faithful. Errors and abuses may certainly have crept in by degrees, as regards the mode of distribution; but it would indeed be illogical to condemn the practice itself as false and deceitful, because it has been sometimes carried out in a spirit quite unlike what its Author intended, and indeed in actual opposition to his wishes.

As to the third accusation respecting the futility of indulgences, we have already shown—and hope to show yet more fully—what good fruit they have borne; first, in the department of art, by prompting the erection of those magnificent cathedrals, numerous hospitals, and peaceful monasteries, which will ever remain a wonder to future generations;<sup>1</sup> next in the range of

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lea (p. 581) is compelled to acknowledge that, without this inducement, it would have been very hard to have the stately structures of the Middle Ages erected, and to carry the arts to the stage of development that they reached in those days. He notes in another passage (p. 210) that Pope Nicholas V used the alms

social interests, by bringing together men of so different countries and of so contrary habits to more perfect civilisation and common sympathy, and generally by their influence in softening men's hearts;<sup>1</sup> and, above all, in the domain of faith, by impressing the deep truths of religion and promoting the spirit of prayer and the practice of good works.

11. There are some writers, however, who will acknowledge the divine institution of indulgences and the beneficent results produced by them, but who will nevertheless persist in asserting that the Church chiefly granted them in order to enrich herself; and also that, with the same object, she favoured the publication of apocryphal indulgences. These, at least, could not possibly be anything but pious frauds or devout artifices.

Let us examine closely into the amount of truth contained in this fresh form of accusation.

If the Church may grant indulgences for all kinds of good works done by the faithful, then she is quite free to attach them to the practice of almsgiving.<sup>2</sup> The giving of alms, in fact, is one of the "works of penance" most frequently recommended in Holy Scripture; it goes with prayer and fasting to make up a complete summary of the Christian penitential code. But the alms for which a prelate grants an indulgence must necessarily have, in his intention, a holy destination. Failing this, they would not contribute to the glory of

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of the Jubilee in 1450 to embellish the city of Rome and to buy as many as five thousand precious Greek and Latin manuscripts; also to bring some celebrated men of learning to Rome and to pension them.

<sup>1</sup> "The 'spiritual powers,'" again writes Mr. Lea (p. 581), "had many weapons with which to withstand or assail the brute force of the 'temporal powers,' but among them not the least efficient was the indulgence, which could be transmuted at will into men or money."

<sup>2</sup> St Thom. *Suppl.* q. xxv, a. 3.



God; and therefore, as the second condition for the validity of an indulgence would be wanting, such grants would certainly be null and void.<sup>1</sup>

The Sovereign Pontiffs, then, had the right to grant an indulgence in view of alms given for a good object, and this is just what they did. Grants of this kind were, to them, the means of bringing to pass many great enterprises, such as the Crusades, the foundation of monasteries, or the building of churches. They became an indirect source of riches to the churches in favour of which they were granted or to neighbouring places. John Villani records that, on the occasion of Boniface VIII's Jubilee, both the Church and the people of Rome were greatly enriched.<sup>2</sup>

It is not improbable that the attacks against indulgences have been prompted by the very fact of their having helped to enrich the Church. Human cupidity has taken the form of jealousy, and jealousy has given birth to calumny. But if the calumniators

<sup>1</sup> See above, Part I, c. ii, n. 7, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> "From the offerings made by pilgrims, the Church increased her own treasure, and the Roman people became rich by the sale, to the pilgrims, of their commodities" (*Chronic.*, Lib. VIII, c. xxxvi, Trieste, 1857). It is not surprising that some innkeepers and other inhabitants should have abused the opportunity afforded them of helping their own interests by the presence of such crowds in Rome. In all centres of pilgrimage or other places where large numbers of people gather at a time, men who can resist the temptation of making a harvest out of the visitors' money are usually not common. In speaking of the Jubilee of 1350, Matthew Villani relates how "the Romans, to increase their excessive profits, instead of supplying the pilgrims—as they could have done—with all sorts of provisions at small cost, kept up the price of bread, wine and meat the whole year through; and they prevented outsiders from bringing in wine or corn, in order that they might sell their own more dearly" (*Chronic.* Lib. I, c. lvi). But what have all these abuses to do with the indulgences? They did not—in the words of the same historian—"hinder people, during that year of Jubilee, from celebrating the dispensation of the merits of Christ's Passion, and the remission of the sins of faithful Christians." See N. Paulus, "Der Ablass als Geldquelle," in *Geschichte*, etc., III. Lib., xvii, p. 450 sqq.

had been granted a share of the riches brought to the Church by indulgences, perhaps they might have been led to acknowledge the many services done by these grants to every section of human society. To say the least, their philanthropic instincts ought to have made them acknowledge the advantages which accrued to humanity, from the fact that indulgences were a means of bringing together men of most different manners and distant climes, in epochs when hardly any means of communication existed.

12. In considering the question of abuses, three hypotheses may be assumed as to the granting and dispensing of indulgences.

On the first assumption, the object for which the grant was made was truly good and praiseworthy, and the money collected as alms was really employed for that end—*e.g.*, for war with the infidels, for building a church, or founding a hospital. In this case there was, of course, no kind of abuse. The indulgence was gained, and was a true means of promoting the glory of God, of performing acts of penance or of helping one's neighbour.

On the second hypothesis, the money originally destined to a noble end may have been diverted from its proper use by individual greed, and spent for that purpose. This is what happened six years before Luther's revolt, when an indulgence was preached in Saxony that funds might be raised for a war against the Turks. All the alms of the faithful on that occasion were divided between the Emperor and the Elector of Saxony, except 200 florins which the latter gave to the church at Wittenberg.<sup>1</sup> In this case also, however, the indulgence was certainly gained by the donors, for the grace is obtained directly the last condition prescribed is fulfilled. The ill-use made by some un-

<sup>1</sup> Schmidt, Book VIII, c. iii.

worthy official of the alms given by the faithful could not obliterate their good work.

But it may happen, on the third hypothesis, that the prelate who grants an indulgence is mistaken about the nature of the work for which he gives it; as, for instance, if he grants it to any one who takes up arms to dethrone a ruler whom he looks upon as an unjust usurper, but who, in fact, is the legitimate possessor of the throne. Or, to put the worst possible case, we may imagine a warlike prelate, wielding both crozier and sword, granting indulgences to all who will fight his personal enemies, even whilst he knows them to be in the full possession of their right; or, again, we will suppose that he promulgates an indulgence with the sole object of increasing his own resources and enabling himself to reward his own guilty partisans.

In the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, when the Protestant public at large invariably saw in the Catholic Church "the scarlet woman," in the Pope "Antichrist," and in Catholic discipline "the abomination of desolation," it was the fashion to represent the practice of indulgences as a most vile traffic, carried on by Popes and Bishops with the sole object of extorting money from the faithful. It is difficult to know at which to wonder most: the boldness of those who invented such absurdities, or the simplicity of the public who accepted them as undoubted facts.

Here is a specimen of what was then usually taught by Protestant authors: "In the beginning of the twelfth century the Bishops, whenever they wanted a supply of money for their private pleasures or the exigencies of the Church, recurred to the scandalous traffic of indulgences; and when the Roman Pontiffs saw that immense treasures were thus accumulated by the inferior rulers of the Church, they thought

proper to limit the powers of the Bishops in remitting the penalties imposed upon transgressors, and assumed it, almost entirely, as a profitable traffic to themselves.”<sup>1</sup>

Accusations of this kind bear in themselves their own refutation. But it was really necessary, especially in England and in Germany, to invent fabulous romances of foreign countries and days gone by, so as to turn aside public attention from the spoliation of churches and monasteries perpetrated at home, and which was still fresh in the memory of all.

13. But, even granting the occasional existence of such abuses, we still maintain that indulgences so given were not fraudulent manœuvres meant to deceive the faithful, in the sense intended by the authors to whom we refer.

It is clear that in the case we now consider, the faithful, even in doing the required works with the right dispositions, would not have gained the indulgence, seeing that the “just motive” required by the very nature of such concessions and insisted upon by the Lateran Council and the Council of Trent, would have been wanting on the part of the prelates. Still, the loss of the indulgence could well be made up for by another advantage, namely, by the very work done in consequence of the alleged grant, which work required in the doer the state of grace, besides the performance of certain virtuous acts of supernatural character. Such acts would perhaps never have been performed without the stimulus arising from the hope—even though, in this case, a vain one—of gaining the indulgence.

Man’s unlimited capacity for abusing good gifts, whether human or divine, cannot make void God’s goodness in granting those gifts, any more than the

<sup>1</sup> Rees’ *Cyclopaedia*, under the word “Indulgence.”

unfaithfulness of God's ministers destroys the graces of which they are the channels. It sometimes happens that such as have had sight or speech miraculously restored offend God with the very eyes that he had opened or the tongue that he had loosed; yet he does not take back the misused powers again.

14. There is not the least doubt that, in the tenth or eleventh centuries, the thought of the spiritual treasures opened to the Christians exercised enormous fascination over their imagination, then filled with faith and enkindled with holy enthusiasm. At that early date, the nature of indulgences had not yet been clearly defined, nor their mode of practice fully determined. Simple people had not yet realised the progressing stages through which a new form of canonical penance had grown up, and had come to be recognised in the Church. They knew that what the Church does is done well, because she is the ark of salvation and the infallible mistress of truth; but they knew not how to distinguish clearly between what really was her work and what their own ardent imagination led them to conceive; and hence, in some cases, the veneration for indulgences degenerated into superstition, and faith into credulity. Fabulous concessions were invented. At Ancona, for instance, it was supposed that Alexander III had granted to the inhabitants of that town as many indulgences as are the grains of sands that a man can scoop up from the shore and hold in his two hands.<sup>1</sup> We have already mentioned the indulgence inaccurately attributed to St Leo III, on his second journey into France.<sup>2</sup>

Some prelates, but little better instructed than their flocks, and men whose intentions were not unimpeach-

<sup>1</sup> Baron. *Annal.* A.D. 1177, n. 49. See also Amort, Part I, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Part II, c. iv, n. 41, p. 279.



able, occasionally exceeded what was wise in their grants. It was perhaps in order to deter such prelates from misusing indulgences that Blessed Stephen, founder and first Abbot of the Monastery of Aubazine in Limousin, refused—in spite of his Bishop's request—to have recourse to this means for the building of his church.

We read as follows in that holy man's life: When he had laid the foundations of his church, the Bishop suggested that he should provide for its completion "by sending throughout the neighbourhood circular letters of indulgence, so as to gain the people's offerings by these abundant spiritual gifts, according to the practice of all church-builders." The saint would not consent to it. "God forbid," he said, "that we should introduce a practice that might scandalise the people and bring trouble on ourselves! God forbid that we should go from church to church, advertising privileges and granting indulgences that God alone can bestow!" Another time, when he was about to build a new monastery, he was advised to ask the Bishop of the place for a letter of recommendation, that he might get help from the people in his work. This he did and the Bishop began writing the letter. When he came to a point where he would have mentioned indulgences, he turned to the Abbot and asked him what indulgences he wished to have granted to those who associated themselves with the undertaking. The holy man replied: "My Lord, our own sins weigh too heavily upon us for us to remove those of others." At these words the Bishop blushed, edified as he was at beholding the saintly founder's disinterestedness.<sup>1</sup>

It must not, however, be concluded from this fact that Bishops had not then the power of granting indulgences, or that the exaggerations of some among them made the just concessions of others null and

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *Praef. in saec. V Bened.*, n. 113.

void. The Blessed Stephen of Aubazine was no doubt moved by a desire of opposing regrettable excesses, when he chose to sacrifice a privilege which he might lawfully have claimed for himself and his church. He was not disputing the principle of indulgences as is proved by a custom that he had himself established in his own monastery. On the day of the Last Supper—Holy Thursday—all the monks had to ask each other's pardon for any offences that they might have committed against one another throughout the year, because, he thought, a day so full of mercy ought to be also a day of universal indulgence.<sup>1</sup>

15. It is undeniable that, in the course of centuries, numerous apocryphal indulgences have been put into circulation and published as authentic.<sup>2</sup> This has been

<sup>1</sup> Acta SS., 8 Mart., t. i, p. 803, col. 1A. As to the incident recorded above, it is well to observe that it is one thing to renounce the privilege of an indulgence voluntarily, but quite another to dispute its value in a general way, and especially to represent the same as being contrary to the love of God. The former act is lawful; the second was condemned by Innocent XI on November 20, 1687, as contained in the following proposition of Michael de Molinos: "Non convenit indulgentias quaerere pro poena propriis peccatis debita; quia melius est divinae justitiae satisfacere, quam divinam misericordiam quaerere; quoniam illud ex puro amore Dei procedit, et istud ab amore nostri interessato, nec est Deo grata nec meritoria, quia est velle crucem fugere." This writer further taught that it is not an act of charity, but a mere work of nature, to help the souls in Purgatory; and also that the latter, far from wishing to be delivered from their pains, ought to resign themselves to the will of God for suffering as well as for being happy. But if we remember, on the one hand, that the souls in Purgatory can no longer merit, and that, on the other, their eternal happiness is certain whenever they are released from prison, we shall see at once that indifference as to whether they remain there or not can be no act of virtue on their part. On the contrary, their desire to quit Purgatory is only an effect of their ardent love; and, consequently, it is an act of charity to pray for them. Hence Mr. Lea is mistaken in finding no inaccuracy in the teaching of Molinos (p. 544).

<sup>2</sup> Regarding spurious indulgences supposed to have been granted in the twelfth century, see N. Paulus, *Die Ablässe der römischen Kirchen vor Innocenz III*, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 1907, pp. 6 sqq.

due either to ignorance, to indiscreet zeal, or to a foolish desire for superiority and pre-eminence. We even find heretics sometimes contemning the indulgences granted by ecclesiastical authorities, and all the while publishing others after their own fancy. Thus, for instance, about A.D. 1248, a sect arose in Germany which supported Frederick II and his son Conrad, and which fought against the Church. Its adherents went about the country preaching against the Pope and the religious Orders, finishing their sermons in these words: "We grant you an indulgence that is not a false one, like those invented by the Pope of Rome and the Bishops, but which comes from God alone and from our Order."<sup>1</sup>

The Church set energetically to work extirpating such abuses, and severely condemning all absurd fables of the kind. A decree of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics, dated March 7, 1678,<sup>2</sup> carefully enumerates and explicitly rejects several of these apocryphal indulgences. A few may be cited:

The indulgence supposed to have been granted by Pope Eugenius III to the prayer of St Bernard in honour of the wound on our Lord's shoulder; one that John XXII was said to have given to whoever should kiss the exact measure of the Blessed Virgin's foot; another, from Pius IV or V, to the Grand Duke of Siena; the indulgences of the confraternities of St Sebastian and St Roch at Perugia and in Rome, and of some other confraternities; an indulgence to be gained by whosoever should carry about his person the exact measure of our Lord's height or of the wound in his side, or the prayer said to have been found in

<sup>1</sup> Raynaldi, *Annal.* t. ii, A.D. 1248, n. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ferraris, *Bibliotheca s. v. Indulgentia*, Edition 1888, p. 249.

his sepulchre.<sup>1</sup> Even nowadays, especially in Italy, one sometimes comes across vendors of detached "leaflets" on which a prayer is printed, and bearing on the reverse side the indication that Pope Clement, Benedict or John (which of the many Popes bearing such names is not mentioned) granted a plenary indulgence for reciting the said prayer.

16. This sort of thing, obviously, is not the teaching of the Church. The Pope and the Councils have severely condemned these lying publications. On November 1, 1330, John XXII caused all the brothers of the "Order of Hospitallers of the Altopasso,"<sup>2</sup> throughout France, to be arrested at the same moment, and their goods to be confiscated, because they had abused certain "Letters of indulgences" by falsely declaring that they contained more indulgences than he had granted. The culprits were sent to various episcopal prisons.<sup>3</sup>

In the following year, the same Pope charged the Bishop of Melfi and the Inquisitor to take proceedings against a new sect of heretics, whose chief was a certain Angelo, from Spoleto, a simple illiterate layman. They affected great sanctity, deceived the people, and presumed to hear confessions, promising indulgences without even being ordained priests.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Examples of apocryphal indulgences of this kind may be found in the classic work on indulgences by Theodore a Sancto Spiritu, Part II, pp. 247 *sqq.* See also the *Decreta Authentica* of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, *passim*; especially August 10, 1899. See *Theol. Mechlin. De Indulgentiis*, 1927, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Altopasso*, or more correctly *Altopascio*, is a castle in Tuscany, in the Valdinievole, formerly called *Teopascio*, whence this Order of Hospitallers took its name. It was founded in the eleventh century, and it soon spread all over Europe. Its members took more share than they ought to have done in the municipal and political affairs of the *Comuni*, and in the quarrels caused by the great Western schism. This brought about the suppression of the Order in the fifteenth century. See Lami, *S. Ecclesiae Florentinae Monumenta*, I, p. 508.

<sup>3</sup> De Sponde, *Annal.* A.D. 1330, n. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Raynaldi, *Annal.* A.D. 1331, n. 6.

On occasion of the Jubilee of 1390, Boniface IX had sent "collectors" to various lands, authorising them to grant the indulgence to those who should give a sum of money equal to what they would have spent on the journey to Rome. Insatiable thirst of gold led these envoys to overstep the limits of their authority. They pretended that they had power to remit all sins without any penance, and to give dispensations for all kinds of irregularities, and by such means gathered large sums of money for themselves. On returning to Rome they were tried and convicted. Many were thrown into prison; some were put to death by the people; and others committed suicide or perished miserably.

Again, there were certain begging monks and secular clergy who wandered about the country pretending to be sent by the Pope or his legates. They gave absolution for money (sometimes for quite minute sums), which they professed to collect in the name of the "Camera Apostolica." They took no account of the gravity of the sins, and required neither contrition nor restitution and penance from sinners. For a slight compensation they dispensed from the vows of chastity, of abstinence, of pilgrimages and from all kinds of obligations. They absolved and reconciled heretics and schismatics without requiring the prescribed abjuration of error. They presumed to legitimate children, and to grant dispensations for marriage within the prohibited degrees.

The Pope, on being informed of the abuses, charged Benedict, Bishop of Ferrara and ecclesiastical treasurer for the Romagna, to proceed summarily against the impostors, to call them to account for their conduct and to throw the guilty ones into prison. He gave the same orders to Beltramieu, Bishop of Como; to Gerard, Bishop of Ratzburg; to Nicholas of



Messieu; to Gerard of Hildesheim, as well as to other prelates.<sup>1</sup>

17. Sometimes these false ideas were propagated by the very preachers of indulgences, in which case the Church took immediate steps to correct the errors by means of her Councils and theological faculties, or through the Papal legates.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century abuses had gone so far that the Council of Vienna (A.D. 1311), presided over by Clement V, judged it necessary to publish a decree restraining the exaggerations of preachers appointed to collect alms. This decree subjected them to supervision, and in case of abuses, to the correction of the diocesan Bishops, without regard to any privileges to the contrary that they might happen to possess. There can be no doubt that the Council fully realised the gravity of these abuses, as it enumerates in detail some of the most notable falsifications impudently propagated by the *Quaestores*.

Some of them had presumed to grant pardons or indulgences on their own account to penitents, dispensing them from vows, and giving them absolution for perjury, homicide and other crimes. Some, in exchange for a certain amount of money, authorised the retaining of ill-gotten goods; whilst others, on condition of a further alms, pretended to open the doors of Purgatory and immediately to admit three (or more) souls, related to the donor, to the joys of heaven. A few were bolder still, and assumed the right to grant the living full absolution in this world and the next—*i.e.*, remission of the guilt and the penalty.<sup>2</sup> Against these and other such lamentable abuses, the Council was inexorable. Heedless of the culprits'

<sup>1</sup> Raynaldi, A.D. 1390, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Clementin., *De Abusionibus*, l. v, tit. ix, de Poenit. et Remiss.

rank, it commanded the Ordinaries to proceed against them without mercy.

Whilst the celebrated Cardinal Nicolas of Cusa was in Germany as Apostolic legate, in 1450, he heard that certain preachers of indulgences, misinterpreting the words *a culpa et a poena*, often employed in *formulae* of concession, taught that indulgences delivered from both the penalty due for sin and the offence committed. This was inaccurate as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> as the indulgence has nothing to do with remission of the guilt. The legate publicly rectified this point of doctrine at the Council of Magdeburg, stating that the Holy See does not grant any indulgence under the form *a culpa et a poena*.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note how, about the same time, the celebrated Servite preacher Ambrosius Spiera (†1454) formally declared that there is no such thing as an indulgence *a poena et a culpa*, and that the Church never uses that form, although the common people freely speak of such an indulgence.<sup>3</sup>

Some years previously the Council of Constance<sup>4</sup> had already decreed the revocation and annulling of all local indulgences granted with the clauses, *a culpa et a poena*, *de plena remissione*, or *ad instar alterius indulgentiae*, showing the decided intention of clearing away all misunderstanding on the point.

When a rash preacher in the diocese of Saintes, anxious to get funds for the rebuilding of the church of St Peter in that town, put forth the proposition that

<sup>1</sup> Above, Part I, c. ii, n. 18, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> See Raynaldi, *Annal.*, A.D. 1450, n. 10. He quotes the "Great Chronicle" of Belgium. See also Benedict XIV, *De Synodo Dioec.* l. xiii, cxviii. Valuable information may also be had on this subject in the learned article of N. Paulus, "Der sogenannte Ablass von Schuld und Strafe," *Geschichte, etc.*, III. Band, xii, p. 330, *sqq.*

<sup>3</sup> *Liber sermonum quadrag. de floribus Sap.* Basil., 1510, 235a.

<sup>4</sup> Sess. XLIII, n. 14. Mansi, t. xxvii, p. 1184.

any one who gave an alms of six blancs—a small coin worth little more than half a farthing—for that purpose would instantly deliver a soul from Purgatory, the Theological Faculty of Paris (A.D. 1482) condemned such a statement as false, proving it to be grounded on no Bull of Sixtus IV, contrary to the preacher's assertion.<sup>1</sup>

Again, when certain Prelates, misusing their powers, granted indulgences that were excessive, their prodigality was checked. The Fourth Lateran Council, held in 1215 under Innocent III, had already declared "that excessive indulgences indiscreetly granted by certain Prelates cause the Keys of the Church to be despised and weaken penitential discipline. Consequently the Fathers decree that, when a church is consecrated, the indulgence given is not to exceed one year, whether the ceremony be performed by one Bishop or several, and that for an anniversary of dedication, or for any other cause, the indulgence shall be of only forty days, as the Pope does not grant more for these occasions."<sup>2</sup>

Three centuries later these words were echoed by the Fathers at the Council of Trent, when they deplored the abuses "which had found their way into ecclesiastical discipline on this point, and in consequence of which the word 'indulgence,' so honourable in itself, is blasphemed by the heretics." The holy Council, therefore, ordered entire suppression of all blameworthy profit in connexion with these favours, on account of past abuses. And, the more completely to avoid all disorder that might be caused by superstition, ignorance or misunderstanding, the Council desired each Bishop to seek out abuses, to present a report of them at the next Provincial Synod in order

<sup>1</sup> D'Argentré, *Collect. judic.*, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> Conc. Lateran. IV, c. lxii.

that the other Bishops might be apprised of the different cases, and afterwards to refer the matter to the judgement of the Pope.<sup>1</sup>

18. In all these abuses the persons most to blame on the whole were the preachers, who tried to win their hearers by every device they could invent. Naturally, extravagant indulgences could not fail to stir the wonder of the simple, credulous crowds. It was partly ambition, but still more the desire for gain, that moved those preachers. Having a right to part of the alms received, they abused the simplicity of the faithful, and, quite forgetting the precept of evangelical poverty, extorted money by simoniacal means. The severe censure passed on these false preachers by Dante will remain as a lasting stigma on their conduct:<sup>2</sup>

The preacher now provides himself with store  
Of jests and gibes, and, so there be no lack  
Of laughter, while he vents them, his big cowl  
Distends, and he has won the meed he sought.  
Could but the vulgar catch a glimpse the while  
Of that dark bird which nestles in his hood,  
They scarce would wait to hear the blessing said,  
Which now the dotards hold in such esteem,  
That every counterfeit, who spreads abroad  
The hands of holy promise, finds a throng  
Of credulous fools beneath. Saint Anthony  
Fattens with this his swine and others worse  
Than swine who diet at his lazy board,  
Paying with unstamped metal<sup>3</sup> for their fare.

But the sovereign Pontiffs have never failed strongly to oppose such unworthy traffic. They repeatedly passed severe decrees against it, and Luther himself was obliged to acknowledge that Leo X, in his Bulls, had condemned the daring assumptions of the *Quaestores*.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes, too, the Popes forbade in-

<sup>1</sup> Sess. XXV, de Indulgent.

<sup>2</sup> *Paradiso*, canto 29, Cary's translation.

<sup>3</sup> Unstamped metal—i.e., "false indulgences."

<sup>4</sup> *Lutheri Opera*, l. I, praef.

dulgences to be preached by *Quaestores*, under pain of making them null. The Bull granted to St Manettus, fourth General of the Servites, in favour of the *Annunziata* in Florence, is an instance of this kind of interdict.<sup>1</sup> In the Council of Basle, A.D. 1436, the Fathers had proposed that a plenary indulgence should be granted "once during life and at the hour of death" to all who should give alms towards the reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches. The legates of Pope Eugenius IV opposed this decree with all their might, lest any one should imagine that indulgences were granted in a simoniacal spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, we may note how the successors of Alexander VI, in order to preclude all suspicion of interested motives in the concession of indulgences, suppressed the condition which that Pontiff had fixed for the gaining of the Jubilee outside Rome, which was the giving of an alms for the war against the Turks.

19. In time the Church adopted an even more rigorous system. The Council of Trent entirely abolished both the name and the office of the *Quaestores*, and suppressed all privileges attached to the function, "because they had committed great abuses in the publication of indulgences." It also decreed that in future all indulgences were to be granted gratuitously,<sup>3</sup> which clause was confirmed and renewed by Pius IV in his decree *Decet Romanum Pontificem*, published in 1562. In 1567 St Pius V further revoked, in the Bull *Etsi dominici gregis*, all indulgences to which any payment whatsoever was attached, or which could give the slightest excuse for collecting alms; and by a second

<sup>1</sup> See above, Part II, chapter iv, n. 14, p. 310. These are the words: "Quas (indulgentias) mitti per quaestuarios firmiter inhibemus; eas, si secus actum fuerit, carere viribus decernentes."

<sup>2</sup> Concil. General. t. xiii, in actis Patricii, p. 1541.

<sup>3</sup> Sess. XIX, c. ix.



Bull, *Quam plenum sit*, three years later, he ordered the Bishops to destroy all Briefs prescribing money contributions that might be in existence.<sup>1</sup>

Thus does the Church constantly watch over the "deposit of faith and morals" that it may be kept intact. Abuses are the work of private individuals, and in no way tarnish the Catholic dogma. They are abnormal excrescences produced by over-exuberant life, which merely need to be lopped off. A sober reasoning will soon help an impartial mind to distinguish between what is of substantial value in any institution and what is only accidental to it. None but a sophist will conclude with Luther, from the abuses committed in the publication of indulgences, that these are merely "impostures of the sycophants of the Roman Curia, good for nothing but destroying faith and gaining money."

20. In this whole matter we may conclude by warning the faithful that certain indulgences granted some centuries ago have since been revoked. As regards the present state of things the latest edition of the Roman *Raccolta*, published by the order and with the approbation of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, should serve as a guide. This collection, however, does not contain *particular* indulgences, but only those granted to the faithful of the whole world. Concessions to various individual countries, religious orders, confraternities and churches, must be sought for in

<sup>1</sup> These two Bulls are contained in the Septim. Decretal., l. III, tit. xiv and xv, and are included in *Jur. Can. Fontes* (Gasparri) I, n. 118, n. 132. Care should be taken not to confound, as many Protestants have done, the pecuniary contributions formerly enacted for indulgences and abolished by St Pius V, with the taxes fixed by the Roman Cancellaria for the concession of certain dispensations or favours and which are still in force, though considerably modified. On the subject of these taxes and matters connected with them, see F. Ryder, in *Catholic Controversy*, Charge IV, sect 4, pp. 223-239, seventh edit., London.

special books approved by the same Sacred Congregation, or at least by the Bishops of the respective dioceses.

Partial indulgences of several hundreds or thousands of years must be mistrusted. They are almost always apocryphal, especially if attributed to Popes who lived in a period when concessions were more restricted than in our own day. In the thirteenth century an indulgence of three or five years was an extraordinary grant; and Pope Nicholas IV, in a Bull of 1290, speaks of one of seven years and seven quarantines as an exceptional favour.<sup>1</sup> St Thomas knows of no plenary indulgence save that of the Crusades,<sup>2</sup> and the greatest partial grant that he names is of seven years.<sup>3</sup> It was only in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that concessions became more abundant;<sup>4</sup> but even then a great many were fabrications, and others have been revoked or changed.

Sometimes the falsification is so evident that no room is left for doubt. Such, for example, is the indulgence of 1,000 years and 120 days, said to have been granted by Gregory IX in 1238 after consecrating the church of St Eusebius in Rome, for visits to that church, from Wednesday in Holy Week to Low Sunday. It is recorded in an inscription engraved on a marble slab in the exterior porch of the church on the right as one enters, and ends with the words: "Omnes hanc ecclesiam visitantes mille annis (*sic*) et centum viginti

<sup>1</sup> *Bullar. Vatican.* I, 213, 214.

<sup>2</sup> *Quodlib.* II, art. 16.

<sup>3</sup> In IV Sent., Dist. XX, qu. 1, art. 3, quaest. iii, sol. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Thus we find, in 1513, Leo X granting an indulgence of one thousand years and as many quarantines to those who should visit the Chapel of the Annunciation in the Servite Church at Florence on Saturday; which concession was doubled for the feasts of our Lady, for Christmas and the two last days in Holy Week.—Amort, Part I, p. 163.

dierum de injunta (*sic*) sibi penitentia indulgentiam consequantur.”

The strange addition of 120 days—in other terms, of “three quarantines”—of indulgence to the enormous figure of 1,000 years, at once rouses suspicion as to the authenticity of this grant. The doubt increases when we find that the word *mille* has evidently been put in the place of another number, for traces of erasure are still to be seen in the marble. Further, it is enough to prove the fraud to glance at an inscription opposite to this one, which records that in 1573, when much more extended indulgences had come to be given, Pope Gregory XIII granted an indulgence of “ten years and ten quarantines” to all the faithful who, truly contrite and confessed, visited the chapel of SS Eusebius, Leo and Benedict, in that church, from first vespers of their feast up to sunset of the following day, and prayed for the peace of Christian princes, etc.: “Decem annos et totidem quadragenas de injunctis seu alias quomodolibet debitis poenitentiis.” If the first inscription were true, then a Pope of the thirteenth century would have granted 1,000 years and three quarantines of indulgence for the same work to which a Pope of the sixteenth annexed only ten years and ten quarantines, a proceeding in utter contradiction to all that we know of the ever-growing practice of the Church in the distribution of her spiritual treasury.

21. But although most of such indulgences are apocryphal, a few are authentic. For instance, an indulgence of 200 years is attached to saying the Rosary of the Seven Dolours;<sup>1</sup> and, again, the Sovereign Pontiff is wont every year to grant an indulgence of 100 years for each day of the Novena preparatory to the feast of

<sup>1</sup> *Raccolta*, n. 170.

Christmas, provided that Novena is performed in the manner in which it is publicly kept in Rome.<sup>1</sup>

"These high figures," says Father Beringer, "need not surprise us very much, if we remember that the Church very often permits the application of these indulgences to the dead, and there may be many souls in Purgatory which have to pay a much more considerable debt. The sacred canons often imposed a penance of seven years and more for one single mortal sin. Are there not in Purgatory souls who, after having spent a long life in disorder, have been converted at the very last moment, but have still to pay to divine justice a debt of temporal penalty due for thousands of sins?"<sup>2</sup> We know that, for one single public mortal sin, a canonical penance of more than seven years' duration was often imposed in the primitive Church. Hence such souls as have lived long lives in offending God both publicly and privately and have only repented when about to leave this world, must be subject to a detention in Purgatory for a far greater duration than corresponds to an indulgence of two hundred years or more.

However this may be, a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, confirmed by Leo XIII, has

<sup>1</sup> *Ut Fidelium*, Sixtus V, October 22, 1586. Cf. *Theol. Mechl. De Indulg.*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> "Uebrigens werden uns solch hochgegriffene Zahlen nicht so sehr auffällig erscheinen, wenn wir bedenken, dass die hl. Kirche jene Ablässe vielfach als den Verstorbenen zuwendbar bewilligt und manche Seelen im Fegfeuer sein können, welche eine weit grössere Schuldenlast an abzubüssenden Strafen sich aufgeladen haben. Das Mass der canonischen Busszeit für Eine Todsünde war oft 3, 7 und mehr Jahre: mag es nicht Seelen im Fegfeuer geben, welche nach einem jahrelangen Sündenleben noch im letzten Augenblick sich eben bekehrten, der göttlichen Gerechtigkeit aber noch die zeitlichen Strafen von Tausenden von Todsünden schulden?" (Vergl. Bellarmin, *de Indulg.*, l. I, c. ix.)—*Die Ablässe, ihr Wesen und Gebrauch*. Paderborn, 1893, p. 55.

revoked and annulled all indulgences of 1,000 years or more, in harmony with the decree of the Council of Trent, without any question as to whether they are apocryphal or authentic.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Decretum, May 26, 1898; cf. *Analecta Ecclesiastica*, October 1898, p. 409. Cf. Theol. Mechl. *De Indulg.*, p. 28.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE REVOLT

#### *Sixteenth Century*

"For they have said . . . But let our strength be the law of justice: for that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth: let us therefore lie in wait for the just, because he is not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings."—*Wisd.* ii 11, 12.

Luther—He begins to break off from the Church of Rome—The scholastic teaching of St Thomas Aquinas—Attacks of Luther—Foundation of Luther's system—Indulgences for the completion of St Peter's—Excesses complained of in the preachers—Luther's opposition—His adversaries, Tetzels and John Eck—The doctrine of indulgences connected with penance and free-will—Conduct of the Church during the attack—Luther at the Pope's tribunal—Decree of Leo X—Luther has recourse to Erasmus—His interview with John Eck—The Bull *Exsurge Domine*—Development of the practice of indulgences—Providence of God concerning the Church—The Venerable Anne Juliana de Gonzaga.

WE have now reached the period when the very foundations of the Church were so violently shaken that, had she been an earthly and human institution, she must inevitably have fallen. Being divine, she stood; but, with Jeremias, she had to cry out: "How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow: the princes of provinces made tributary! Weeping she hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. There is none to comfort her among all them

that were dear to her; all her friends have despised her and are become her enemies."<sup>1</sup>

It was in the northern regions of Europe, as we know, that hundreds of thousands of the Church's children were torn from her, and to Martin Luther is due the unenvied credit of the work.

When we read of the sentiments uttered by this man before he broke with the Church, the change that took place in his mind within a few years seems almost incredible. On his first visit to Rome, in 1510, he had fallen on his knees, and then, raising his eyes to heaven, had cried: "Hail, O holy Rome, truly sanctified by the holy martyrs and their blood!" He had visited the catacombs and the churches, and had celebrated Mass there, even regretting that, as his parents were still living, he could not make use of Masses, prayers, and other good works to relieve them from Purgatory.<sup>2</sup>

Some years later he wrote his book on *The Captivity of Babylon*, in which he represented Rome as the city of confusion, the sacrifice of the Mass as the worst of abominations, and good works as a sin, whilst indulgences were for him mere frauds and impostures.

It was the same with his attitude towards the Holy See. On Trinity Sunday, 1518, when his propositions were already attracting notice in the Catholic world, he wrote to Leo X: "Most holy Father, I prostrate myself at the feet of your Holiness, and offer myself to you with all that I have and all that I am. Give life or death, banish or recall, approve or reprimand, as it shall please you. I shall obey your voice absolutely as that of Christ, who dwells in you and speaks by your lips." Even on March 21 of the following year he wrote a similar letter, full of protestations of loyalty, in which he acknowledged the Pope's authority as

<sup>1</sup> Lament. i 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Walcher, t. v, p 1646, and t. xxii, p. 2374.

first after that of Christ himself. But one year later the Pope had become for him anti-Christ in person; his teaching, heresy; his commands, oppression and tyranny; and his court, a rock of scandal, a place of abomination.

How could a man have come to contradict himself so glaringly within but a few years? Such a proceeding implies a radical change, not in the intellectual order only, but in the moral as well. What were the causes of such a change?

2. Some historians date Luther's revolt against the Church and the beginning of his reformation, from his formal repudiation of indulgences in 1517. But other writers,<sup>1</sup> with a weight of documents, prove that the origin of Luther's heresies lies much farther back. They find the underlying principle of the reformer's errors in his contempt for the traditional philosophy and his aversion to scholastic teaching.

In 1516, after having for many years taught Aristotle's *Physics* at Wittenberg—without however having thoroughly understood the system—he wrote to the Augustinian Prior of Erfurt: "I should like nothing so much, if I had the leisure, as to unmask and lay bare before the world in all his ugliness that comic author—*i.e.*, Aristotle—who has for so long amused the Church beneath his Grecian mask." And in the same year he wrote to George Spalatin, secretary of the Elector of Saxony: "Our theology and St Augustine are advancing; but Aristotle is rapidly going down, and the schoolmen with him." At the beginning of 1517, even before the discussion on indulgences had been broached, he published eighty-nine theses against the scholastic teaching and what he called "the dreams of Aristotle."

<sup>1</sup> See Rohrbacher, *Histoire Univ. de l'Église Catholique*, Lib. LXXXIV; H. Denife, *Luther und Lutherthum*.

He liked St Thomas no better than the Stagirite, as may be seen from what he did later on. When on October 16, 1518, he resolved to flee secretly from Augsburg, where Cardinal Cajetan had been sent as papal legate by Leo X to meet him and refute his errors, he first posted up an appeal "from the ill-informed Pope to the better-informed Pope," giving as one reason among others for his departure, that he could not admit St Thomas's opinions, which Cajetan followed on all points.

This fact is most significant. Luther had a double object in his undertaking: first, to destroy the Church as then existing, and second to raise one after his own fashion on the ruins. That he should have begun the work by rejecting scholastic philosophy and theology, decisively proves the practical value of both to the Catholic Church.

3. We have not here to trace the history or to sound the praises of scholasticism. The seed sown by St John Damascene, and watered by Peter Lombard and St Anselm, had become a majestic tree through the watchful care of the thirteenth-century doctors. They had taken the dogmas of the Church, reduced them to a most solid and luminous system, in harmony with the dictates of reason and with natural truths. By subtly distinguishing between cause and effect, genus and species, they succeeded in presenting theology as a scientific branch of learning, possessing a terminology of its own. Revealed truth, under the light thrown upon it by Dominican and Franciscan Doctors, no longer consisted of independent propositions and isolated tenets. It formed a body of doctrine governed by unassailable principles, firmly bound together, and animated by one spirit. The dogma of indulgences, among others, was set forth with clearness, at least on its broadest lines.

Among all the great doctors of that memorable period St Thomas Aquinas, as we know, stands foremost. Called, in his early days of thoughtful listening and unrelenting study, *the dumb Ox*, he no sooner became himself Master in Divinity, than he let his voice be heard, "even to the ends of the earth."

Whether teaching in private or in public, in his school or monastery, in church or at the pontifical court, his marvellous intellect was ever active, building up, with calm reflection and steady design, the great edifice of truth, natural and revealed, which he was one day to put forth before the eyes of the world. To him, science was not to be separated from faith, and theology was to be the centre of all truth, the light on all difficulties, the tribunal to which all questions were ultimately to be brought. Hence his project of writing a treatise that should embody, under the light of revelation, all knowledge, both human and divine.

St Thomas began this great work, called the *Summa Theologica*, at the age of forty, and spent the last nine years of his life in writing it. This wonderful book can be compared to the great medieval cathedrals for grandeur and beauty, and we may even go so far as to conjecture that the holy Doctor had in his mind some relation between his work and those splendid piles.

"The *Summa*, in fact, is made up of three parts, like those famous cathedrals. The first, consecrated to God and his works, corresponds to the chief nave and the aisles. The second part, whose object is the essential or actual relation of man to God, his last end and his supreme happiness, corresponds to the transept, or *transverse nave*, which is supported by the proper nave, as the arms of a cross by the upright portion. Also, just as the transept is divided into two sections, to right and left, so the second part of the



*Summa* is divided into two; the *first of the second* (as it is called), which considers our obligations towards God in general; and the *second of the second*, which treats of them in minute detail. Lastly, to the apse of our cathedrals corresponds the third part of the *Summa*, which treats of the Word Incarnate, of his sacraments, his adorable sacrifice, and his glorification in heaven amid the souls redeemed by his precious Blood. This theological and mystical 'fane,' entirely planned by the Angelic Doctor and almost entirely put together by him, was finished after his death by one of his disciples, with materials taken from the finest earlier works of this Prince of theology."<sup>1</sup> It is indeed to be regretted that the saint did not live fully to complete this last part himself, and particularly to mark out the nature and working of indulgences with the depth and clearness proper to the *Summa*.

4. In the sixteenth century the scholastic teaching was still held in high esteem. The two schools, the "Angelic" and the "Seraphic," numbered, between them, a phalanx of learned Masters. If they sometimes allowed themselves to be led into over-subtle discussions, it was only that they might probe the scholastic system to its very depths, and thus be armed against every attack directed at the dogmas of the Church.

Luther, albeit he had profited but little personally by this system, knew its value for teaching purposes. He was aware that he could not hope to undermine the city and ruin it, unless he began by pulling down the walls and bastions that protected it. He saw that the shortest way to conquer his enemies was to snatch from them the weapons wherein they mostly trusted. In other words, he wished to put in practice what one of his disciples, Bucer, expressed in words later on:

<sup>1</sup> Jules Didiot, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin*, Société de St Aug., 1894, p. 86.

“Tolle Thomam, et dissipabo Ecclesiam—Take away Thomas, and I will ruin the Church.”<sup>1</sup>

Thanks to God, the soldiers of the Church saw the danger, wielded their arms, and won the victory. A veritable constellation of great theologians arose in consequence of Luther's revolt—men who united solid doctrine with the powerful scholastic method. It will be enough here to recall the names of Cardinal Cajetan and his remarkable commentary on St Thomas, and Cardinal Bellarmine, whose controversial works are as clear in exposition as they are rigorous in logic.

<sup>1</sup> It was this very same contempt for Scholasticism that inspired the pamphlet, of Jansenistic tendencies, called *Trattato storico-dogmatico-critico delle Indulgenze*. It appeared anonymously, but Mr. Lea (p. 546) attributes it to Vincent Palmieri, and shows a certain amount of sympathy with it, though he has not seen it himself. Now this *opusculum*—of which a fourth edition was published at Genoa in 1798—exactly represents the Jansenistic teaching of the pseudo-synod of Pistoja on the subject of indulgences. By the author's own confession it was written to supply the defects of the scholastics. He says (p. xii) that the latter “are generally satisfied with defending what is already taught in their particular schools, by subtleties and dry arguments; that they never go farther back than one century, and that, having written an immense volume to defend indulgences, they have not even got so far as to know what they are, or on what grounds the Church supports her power of granting them.” He adds (p. xiii) that none of the most renowned scholastics “such as Bellarmine, Suarez, Tolet, Cajetan, without even excepting St Thomas and Cardinal Richelieu” (!), has treated this subject properly; whilst eminent men like “the great Arnaud (?), Morin, Bossuet, Papebroke, Mabillon and Muratori,” have never spoken of it except incidentally. But how could this writer forget that the definition of indulgences given by the Council of Trent, which he himself describes as very prudent (p. xii), was dictated by the leaders of Scholasticism? Was he not acquainted with the writings of the learned Canon Regular Eusebius Amort, an equally thorough scholastic and learned historian; especially with his *Notitia Historica, Dogmatica, Polemica, Critica de Origine, Progressu, Valore, ac Fructu Indulgentiarum* (Augustae Vindelicorum et Graecii, 1735)? In truth, this very work arouses his admiration, for he calls it (p. 7, n. 3) “a monument of immense labour,” out of which he himself frankly acknowledges having borrowed quotations of works that he was unable to consult directly.

A century later most of the theological schools departed from the way beaten by so many generations, being attracted by the superficial brilliance of the fresh methods inaugurated by Descartes. For two centuries and more these new theories supplanted scholastic teaching, and with unfortunate consequences as was found later on; for the dogmas of the Church, which were frequently attacked, came to be but poorly defended except by those who clung fast to the traditional teaching of the Church. It will not be the least of Leo XIII's many claims to honour that he brought back philosophers and theologians to the ancient scholastic teaching, ordering them to go straight to the pure and inexhaustible fountain of St Thomas himself.<sup>1</sup>

If Henry VIII was in a position to refute Luther, whom he called "the scourge of God's anger against Christians," he owed this to the Angelic Doctor, whom he had studied in his youth and whom he praised in the highest degree. Well if he had remained faithful to that sound teaching! As is well known, what gained for him and his successors the title *Fidei Defensor* given him by Leo X, was the very book in which he defended the doctrines attacked by Luther, including that of indulgences.<sup>2</sup>

5. After thus cutting himself off from the tradition of the Schools and thereby adopting a position of true

<sup>1</sup> "Providete ut sapientia Thomae ex ipsis ejus fontibus hauriatur."—Encyclical Letter of Leo XIII, "Aeterni Patris." August 4, 1879. *Jur. Can. Fontes* III. n. 578. Cf. *Cod. Jur.* 1366, § 2 . . . professores (studia) omnino pertractent ad Angelici doctoris rationem, doctrinam et principia, eaque sancte teneant.

<sup>2</sup> On this title see Father T. E. Bridgett's, C.S.S.R., pamphlet, *The Defender of the Faith, The Royal Title, its History and Value* (London: Burns and Oates). In this the author claims for Henry VIII the authorship of the book *Assertio septem Sacramentorum*.—"Henry's condemnations, objurgations and appeals," says Father Bridgett (c. iii, p. 43), "remind the modern reader less of Luther's extravagances than of Henry's own."

theological anarchy with no rule of faith,<sup>1</sup> Luther created on his own account a new system of doctrine whose fundamental principle was "faith alone"—a naked, abstract, barren faith, which, according to him, was the sole means of justification for man. It is said that the first outlines of his system were suggested to him by a monk of his Order. One day, we are told, Martin Luther was feeling uneasy about his vocation and his eternal salvation, and opened his mind to one of his older brethren, who replied that he ought to believe in his salvation and rest entirely on that belief. This thought made an impression on Luther, especially after reading some passages in the Epistle to the Romans where the apostle exalts the principle of faith above the works of the law. Yielding to this impulse, he made faith—and faith *alone*—the one cause of justification and salvation; without it everything is useless; with it everything else is superfluous. In that case, good works are profitless and even sinful; the sacraments are merely a useless invention and confer no grace; whilst penance is an insult to Christ who has fully satisfied for our sins. And what of indulgences? They, of course, are a pure invention only fit to deceive the faithful.

However, Luther did not put forth all these extreme conclusions all at once. He understood that an abrupt

<sup>1</sup> The reader may find ample justification for this assertion as well as an authentic exposition of Luther's travesty of Catholic teaching due to his contempt for the traditional methods, particularly in what regards the religious state, in Fr. Heinrich Denifle, O.P., *Luther und Luthertum in der ersten Entwicklung*. The following words should be noted: "Der Reformator manövierte sehr gut, wenn er alles auf Thomas von Aquins hob; er wusste wohl, dass Thomas nach dem hl. Augustin der in der Kirche am meisten geschätzte Lehrer war. Wie Luther vor keinem Mittel zurückschreckte, wenn es galt, die Kirche zu bekämpfen, so scheute er auch vor nichts zurück, um Thomas verächtlich zu machen, obwohl er ihn, wie sich im Laufe des Werkes ergeben wird, gar nicht kennt."—P. 232, Mainz, 1904.

denial of everything practised in the Church would hinder his work of reform; and hence, as we shall see, he carefully calculated his movements.

6. Just at that time Leo X, who had inherited from his family a love of magnificent undertakings, was engaged in carrying on the building of St Peter's, begun some years before by his predecessor, Julius II. Large sums were needed for the purpose. On the other hand, the work was one calculated to promote the glory of God and the good of souls. Therefore, in the course of the year 1517, the Pope published indulgences in the northern provinces of Germany,<sup>1</sup> just as Julius II had done seven years before throughout the Catholic world.<sup>2</sup> The indulgence was granted to all who should help to bring about the completion of that immense pile by their alms. The Pope entrusted the choice of men for preaching this indulgence to Albert of Brandenburg, Elector of Mainz and Archbishop of Magdeburg. The commissioner appointed for Saxony was John Tetzel, Dominican Provincial, who in his turn chose for subcommissioners those among his friars whom he thought fit for the office.

7. However, there grew up round Luther an unquiet and insubordinate party. The brilliant and impassioned eloquence of the young leader had fascinated his disciples, who were ready to swear by his words and to follow him wherever he might have chosen to lead them.

There was no reason, either from past tradition or

<sup>1</sup> See Amort, *op. cit.*, Part I, sect. vii, p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> Bull *Liquet omnibus*, of January 11, 1510. See Amort, *l.c.*, p. 205. This Bull was the occasion for Luther to inveigh against indulgences. It is enough to read it without prejudice, and with the necessary commentaries, to see that it contains nothing to justify Mr. Lea's assertion (p. 75) that "the whole document . . . is redolent from beginning to end with the odour of filthy gain." Cf. p. 380, n. 1.



in the nature of things, why the preaching of the indulgence should have been entrusted to the Augustinians rather than to the Dominicans. But Luther took offence from the preference given to the members of a rival Order, whom he accused—with or without reason—of great excesses in the performance of their work.

Murmurs were raised in the university of Wittenberg, and a variety of charges spread abroad. The preachers of the indulgence, it was said, were chiefly moved by vainglory, cupidity, and presumption. Further, it was reported that they uttered heretical propositions; that they were partial in dispensing the indulgences, as if measuring them by the money received; that they set their dispensing offices in taverns, there, amid the clatter of the wine-cups, receiving the alms of the faithful and delivering their letters of indulgence. Others, again, were said to have taught that whoever gives an alms on his own account infallibly lets himself into heaven, whilst all alms given for a dead person are certain to deliver his soul from the fire of Purgatory. Many other like accusations were added which greatly worked on the popular mind.<sup>1</sup>

It is quite possible that among the said preachers there may have been abuses of power, excesses in the use and administration of the sacred keys, inaccurate statements made and scandal given; and it is, in fact, very difficult to excuse them entirely. But the maliciousness of the accusers, their interestedness in exaggerating abuses, and the very enormity of the excesses pointed out, are enough to put the reader on his guard. The historical accuracy of all these accusations must not be too readily admitted; nor must we too hastily

<sup>1</sup> See John Lingard, D.D., *History of England*, t. iv, c. vii.

condemn those who had been appointed to proclaim and distribute the holy indulgences.<sup>1</sup>

But, admitting the existence of such abuses, were they sufficient ground for accusing the Catholic Church of corruption and error? She never authorised the abuses: on the contrary, she severely condemned them. Besides, it will always be the same to the end of time—the tares will grow with the wheat, even among the ministers of the Gospel. In Luther's eyes, the tares were so plentiful that they could no longer be distinguished from the wheat. He therefore began denouncing the institution as a source of corruption, offering himself as sent from heaven to cleanse the field of the Holy of Holies.

8. The fact was, undoubtedly, that the Friar of Wittenberg had long wished to come before the world. Now at last he had found his opportunity; for, having shown such apparent zeal both for purity of faith and morals and for the honour of his own Order, he was commissioned by John Staupitz, then Vicar-General of the Augustinians, to oppose the preachers of the indulgences and to unmask their excesses.

Luther began, therefore, by speaking against the abuses, but he soon passed from them to the doctrine of indulgences itself. On All Saints' Eve, 1517, he publicly defended at Wittenberg ninety-five propositions on the nature of indulgences and the errors of the *quaestuarii*, though, as he himself declared later on in a pamphlet written against Hans Worst, he did not even know what indulgences were.<sup>2</sup>

These ninety-five propositions are the most extraordinary medley that could be imagined. By the side

<sup>1</sup> That there is nothing easier than to invent calumnies on matters belonging to indulgences is clearly shown in the article by Fr. Sydney Smith, S.J., "The Duchess Bona's Indulgence" (the *Month*, June, 1895, p. 175).

<sup>2</sup> Opp. Lutheri, ed. Wittenberg, 1572, pp. 12, 324.

of accurate statements we find erroneous propositions, new and presumptuous opinions. For instance, we are told that indulgences are nothing but a remission of canonical penance; that they bring no alleviation to the souls in Purgatory; that they should not be preferred to good works. Proposition 50 says: "If the Pope knew the extortions that are committed by the preachers of indulgences, he would rather see St Peter's burnt than have it built up at such a cost"; and the seventy-first proposition categorically declares: "If any one denies the truth of indulgences granted by the Pope, let him be anathema."

Luther sent these propositions to Albert, Archbishop of Magdeburg, with a letter begging him to remedy the abuses committed. The fair appearance of zeal and apostolic liberty displayed by Luther, as well as the fact that his theses had been approved by some orthodox theologians, deceived many and influenced public opinion in his favour.

9. But God had chosen a valiant opponent to the Reformer in the Dominican, John Tetzel. He replied to the propositions of the Augustinian friar by a hundred and six theses, which contained a clear and methodical statement of Catholic doctrine as to indulgences. These theses were drawn up, not by Tetzel himself, but, as was often the case at that time, by the ordinary professor of theology, who then was Konrad Wimpina. Shortly after he published a second list of theses, fifty in all, composed by himself.<sup>1</sup> Tetzel was a profound theologian, well versed in the sacred sciences. He could fairly represent the genuine traditions of St Thomas's school, combined with a solid exposition of Catholic teaching, which it is the special mission of St Dominic's sons to defend. He was also a keen and far-seeing observer and gauged

<sup>1</sup> N. Paulus, in Wetzer und Welte's *Kirchenlexicon*, art. Tetzel.

at once the depth of error to which Luther's assertions might eventually lead.

Nevertheless, had Tetzel joined to his intellectual acumen a little more gentleness and pliancy, perhaps Catholic truth might have gained, and the enemies of the Church might have been kept back from falling into the miserable abyss, dragging along with them multitudes in their fall. The simplicity of the dove has never prejudiced the prudence of the serpent. Indeed, had not Tetzel burnt publicly Luther's theses, the world might perhaps have been spared the comedy of seeing immediately afterwards Luther's disciples burning Tetzel's propositions in the great square of Wittenberg. But it would be unjust to judge the custom of Germany in the sixteenth century by present-day manners.<sup>1</sup>

Another conspicuous champion of Catholic truth was John Eck [Eckius], doctor in theology and vice-chancellor of Ingolstadt University. At the beginning of 1518 he wrote some "observations on Luther's propositions," to vindicate the uninterrupted Catholic tradition on indulgences.

10. But Luther was well aware that the question of indulgences was after all only secondary, depending

<sup>1</sup> See Tetzel's justification by Dr. Janssen, *Histoire du Peuple Allemand*, t. ii, p. 77, and Dr. Groene's *Tetzel et Luther, ou Histoire et Justification du Dr J. Tetzel, prédicateur des Ind. et Inquisiteur*, 2me édit. "The tendency of modern research," says in his turn Fr Sydney Smith, "has been to acquit him [Tetzel]" (the *Month*, June, 1895, p. 187). We must not omit to mention here Dr. Pastor's instalment of the *Geschichte der Päpste seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Herder), where interesting details on this subject are given. The author follows Paulus, whose studies have somewhat modified Groene's statements. Dr. Pastor's conclusions are that the celebrated preacher was orthodox enough when speaking of indulgences for the living, but that in regard to indulgences applicable to the souls in Purgatory his teaching was not always unimpeachable. Hence the saying attributed to him: "Sobald das Geld in Kasten klingt, die Seele aus dem Fegfeuer springt."

essentially upon penance and freewill. For if there be such a thing as penance, a remission of the penalty either by the person offended or by his representative must be possible; and if man is endowed with freewill, he is responsible for his actions, which may be bad or good according to their conformity with the moral law, and to which consequently the hope of reward or the fear of punishment is attached. But if, on the other hand, indulgences are abolished, then penance, good works, and satisfactory practices of all kinds must go too, and man must be able to do good or evil without being responsible for it.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, these three things—freewill, penance, and indulgences—are so closely bound together that one cannot be suppressed without the other two being destroyed, as Luther plainly saw. In the theses that he published in reply to John Eck, and in his other work on *The Captivity of Babylon*, he began by abolishing human liberty that he might the more logically go on to deny, first, the use of good works, and then the power of the Church to remit temporal penalty by means of indulgences.

For Luther, then, human liberty is but a name. Man is not master of his own actions, but is subject to inevitable necessity, and his will, instead of being free, is a slave. Thus, destitute of responsibility, he has by nature—*i.e.*, without grace—no power except that of sinning. All the good works he may do are so many sins; and however hard he tries, he cannot help sinning mortally, for all sins are mortal according to this theory. And since man has no liberty either for doing good or avoiding evil, neither has he any for

<sup>1</sup> The above passage is merely a short summary of Luther's Protestant system, *not* an argument in defence of indulgences, as Mr. Lea supposes (p. 579, n. 1) when he quotes it, curtailed, from our own work.



obtaining pardon of his offences. It is God who always remits both the guilt and the penalty *gratuitously*; therefore the penalty cannot be remitted by man, and hence the fallacy of indulgences.<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen that it was quite consistent with this teaching of Luther that all disputes between Catholic doctors and Lutheran teachers should henceforth turn chiefly on the questions of human liberty and the sacraments, freewill and justification, indulgences themselves becoming quite a minor consideration. The materialists of our own day reason very much after Luther's fashion, destroying human liberty and leaving every man to follow his own passions blindly. If a divinity is admitted at all, it is one that cannot be severe on our misdeeds, which are the necessary consequences of our nature.

II. The Church, it must be observed, behaved in face of all these attacks with the dignity that has always distinguished her. Following St Paul's advice to Timothy, she avoided wordy disputes, as far as possible, as only hurtful to souls, and aimed rather at presenting herself "approved unto God," needing not to be ashamed, "but rightly handling the word of truth."<sup>2</sup>

Before the controversy had deviated from the question of indulgences to other more capital points, the Church continued by the mouth of her universities to condemn erroneous opinions and confirm true ones on that subject. In May, 1518, the Faculty of Theology in Paris rejected the following proposition as false and scandalous: "If a testoon<sup>3</sup> is put into the money-box for a soul in Purgatory, that soul goes immediately and

<sup>1</sup> See the Bull *Exsurge Domine* of June 15, 1520, propos. 13, 15, 31, 32, 36. Denzinger, 753 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. ii 14, 15.

<sup>3</sup> An ancient silver coin struck under Louis XII, worth about eightpence of English money.

infallibly to Paradise, and if ten testoons are put in for ten souls, that number also will go to Paradise." On the other hand, the Faculty approved as true this other proposition: "It is not certain that all the souls in Purgatory, for which the faithful put ten sous tournois<sup>1</sup> into the box of the Crusade, will go immediately to heaven; we must trust to the judgement of God, who accepts as he pleases the treasure of the Church applied to these souls."<sup>2</sup>

At the same time the Church went on granting new indulgences, as if no question had ever been raised against them. Leo X sent Cardinal Lawrence Campeggio to England with a double mission: first, to obtain financial help from the clergy for the war with the Turks; and secondly, to induce Henry VIII to join the League formed by the Pope to unite all Christian princes in defence of religion and the Church. Wolsey was associated with him as co-legate. Campeggio made a solemn entry into London on July 29, 1518, and a Bull was read from the Pope granting indulgences to all who should assist at the Mass celebrated by either of the legates in presence of the King and Queen, or who should receive the Prelate's blessing, on the usual conditions of contrition and confession.

We must also mention another indulgence closely connected with our subject. As in those days indulgences were sometimes granted for the reading of good books, Leo X gave one to readers of Henry VIII's "*Assertio septem Sacramentorum*," which he praised as containing "admirable doctrine."<sup>3</sup>

12. In spite of his reiterated protestations of fidelity and submission to Leo X, Luther became amenable

<sup>1</sup> An ancient French coin so named because it was first struck at Tours. It was worth about a modern franc.

<sup>2</sup> See D'Argentré, *Collect. judic. de nov. Error.*, t. i. b. 355, ex registr. censur. fol. 171.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Bridgett, *op. cit.*, c. iii, p. 41.

to the ecclesiastical tribunals through his obstinacy in maintaining doctrines contrary to those of the Church. The Pope reserved the matter to himself, and summoned Luther to Rome, giving him sixty days in which to make the journey. But the Reformer could not easily be induced to go to the centre of the faith, and defend his new doctrines where the lamp of truth is ever burning. He therefore put forward all kinds of fanciful hindrances, asking to be judged in Germany. The Pope agreed, and sent over Thomas Vio, the celebrated Cardinal Cajetan,<sup>1</sup> further fixing the place of judgement at Augsburg, where the Emperor Maximilian was then presiding at the Diet.

The legate had only two interviews with Luther on the question of indulgences.

In the first interview Cajetan put forward the Constitution *Unigenitus* of Clement VI referred to above.<sup>2</sup> In this it is said that the merits of Christ constitute the treasure of indulgences; that one drop of his precious Blood could have washed away the sins of thousands of worlds had they existed, and that his merits are therefore inexhaustible. The merits of the Blessed Virgin and the saints also help to form the treasure of the Church, not as a necessary element, but by way of superabundance.

Luther replied that this Constitution was based on no text of Scripture, and that the saints could not have any superabundant merits, as they were even incapable of making satisfaction for themselves.

This was equivalent to waiving the question of indulgences for that of justification by faith alone, in other words, for what might be called, in Luther's sense, the sinfulness of good works. Cajetan's keen insight immediately discovered this, and he cut short

<sup>1</sup> Called so from Gaeta or Cajeta, his birthplace.

<sup>2</sup> See Part II, c. vi, n. 7, p. 362.

all further discussion on indulgences by requiring Luther to acknowledge the Pope's authority. Had Luther consented, the whole thing would soon have come to an end, as indulgences would have been implicitly included among the many truths accepted by faith on the authority of the Pope. But he eluded the question by having recourse to a distinction which the seventeenth-century Jansenists were to adopt afterwards—by appealing “from the Pope ill-informed to the Pope better informed.”

In the second and last interview, Luther, accompanied by four senators of Augsburg, presented Cajetan with a letter in which he protested his obedience to the Holy See, whilst contradicting himself by still refusing to accept Clement VI's Constitution.

Thus was Luther planting the root of schism by rejecting the authentic teaching of the Church. It only remained for him to complete his work by throwing off altogether the yoke of papal authority and making himself high priest of a new religion, based on complete spiritual independence.

13. Seeing that Luther's teaching was gaining ground every day, and fearing lest the faithful might be shaken in their faith, Leo X published, on December 9 in that same year, 1518, a decree wherein he declared that the Sovereign Pontiff, successor of St Peter and Vicar of Christ, possesses, by virtue of the keys, the power of remitting both the guilt and the penalty of sin—the guilt with its eternal punishment, in the sacrament of penance, and the temporal punishment by indulgences. He added that, for just and reasonable causes, the Pope may grant to the faithful members of Jesus Christ indulgences whose use extends not only to the living but to the dead; that indulgences are derived from the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints, and that the Pope has the right of dispensing this treasure,

which he may do not only by way of absolution, but also, and this in relation to the dead, by way of suffrage.

14. Luther, however, knowing the weakness of his position and the poverty of the cause that he had undertaken to defend, looked round for some one to support him. Erasmus was just then renowned all over Germany, alike for his brilliant learning, especially as an Oriental scholar of the Bible, and for his eagerness to embrace new doctrines. His coarse invectives against scholasticism, the religious Orders and indulgences also,<sup>1</sup> were all reasons for making the monk of Wittenberg determine upon gaining him as an advocate for his cause.

But, thoughtless as he had been in trying his wits on matters closely connected with dogma, Erasmus was frightened at the idea of separation from an authority which he looked upon as the only guide to the harbour of salvation. He answered Luther in that sense, and tried, in the most moving words he could command, to turn him aside from his mistaken course. But it was all in vain, for Luther was determined to work out his errors to their last conclusions.<sup>2</sup>

15. An incident soon happened which proved the reformer's motive, in obstinately adhering to his opinions, to have been other than a love of truth. On July 11, 1519, John Eck had a conference with Luther and Melancthon at Leipzig, in the castle of the Duke George of Saxony, uncle to the Elector Frederic, on the question of indulgences. John Eck quoted the numerous and well-authenticated witnesses of tradi-

<sup>1</sup> According to the testimony of Albert Pius, Erasmus had opposed indulgences some time before Luther, jokingly observing that they serve the faithful as water clocks to measure the duration of Purgatory, and to count its centuries, years, months, days and hours as exactly as by a reckoning table.

<sup>2</sup> See Raynaldi, *Annal.* A.D. 1516, n. 96. See also Erasmus's book, *Laus Stultitiae*.



tion—St Gregory, the Council of Vienna, and those of the Lateran and of Constance. He used such powerful arguments and reasoned so clearly that Luther was compelled to acknowledge the Pope's power of granting indulgences, and even to admit the benefit of such pardons. Yet, rather than yield, he gave way to violent recrimination, and offered fresh insults to the preachers of indulgences. He felt that he had had the worst of the discussion, but he would retract none of his errors, and ended by vomiting forth a perfect deluge of invective against the Pope, the Church, and her dogmas.

Rome had waited patiently for three years without putting forth her censures, hoping that Luther would come back to the faith of his fathers. Other authorities, however, had less patience. The University of Cologne solemnly condemned Luther and his writings in August, 1519, and in November of the same year the University of Louvain did the same. The religious Order to which he belonged was startled at the audacity of its apparently promising subject, and a chapter vainly commissioned two friars to try to bring him back to the truth.

16. John Eck and John Ulrich had already gone to Rome to denounce Luther, and the Pope at length had lost all hope of winning him. On the other hand, schism and heresy were beginning to assume alarming proportions. Therefore, on June 15, 1520, Leo X published the Bull *Exsurge Domine*; which, in forty-one Articles, condemned Luther's doctrine on penance, indulgences, the authority of Pope, Church, and Councils, and on good works and Purgatory. The preamble of this document shows how fully the Pope realised the danger to be met, and the terrible consequences involved; also, how entirely he put his confidence in God, not in man.

The articles on indulgences are six in number. It will not be amiss here to quote the condemned propositions, as the contradictory statements contain the true doctrine of the Catholic Church on the point.

I. The treasures of the Church, which the Pope draws upon for granting indulgences, are not the merits of Christ and his saints.

II. Indulgences are pious frauds practised on the faithful; they dispense them from good works and are among things allowable but not useful.

III. For those who truly gain them, indulgences are not valid for the remission of penalty due to divine justice on account of actual sin.

IV. It is a deceit and an illusion to believe that indulgences are wholesome and fruitful in spiritual results.

V. Indulgences are only necessary for public offences, and are properly only granted to those who are hardened and refuse to suffer (*impatiensibus*).

VI. They are neither necessary nor useful to six classes of people: to the dead and dying, to the sick, to those who are legitimately hindered, to those who have committed no crime, to those who have committed faults but not public ones, and lastly to those who practise the works of perfection.<sup>1</sup>

It would be difficult to imagine a more incoherent presentation of Catholic doctrine than that contained in these six propositions. For if it is an error to believe that indulgences are wholesome and useful, what can be the use of granting them to hardened sinners and those who refuse to suffer? And again, as Henry VIII remarked, if Luther entirely denied

<sup>1</sup> These are propositions 17-22 among the forty-one condemned by the Bull *Exsurge Domine*. See the *Bullar. Rom.* of Car. Cocquelines, Rome, 1743, t. iii, p. iii, p. 489. Denzinger, 755 sqq.

the existence of Purgatory, why should we discuss the usefulness of any help towards delivering souls from Purgatory?<sup>1</sup> Many more remarks might be made on the subject.

As we have said, abuses were the work of private individuals, often severely condemned and punished by the Church. Among the *centum gravamina*<sup>2</sup> that the Diet of Nuremberg sent to Pope Adrian VI in 1523 figure the Roman indulgences, which are described as an insupportable burden to the Germans, because through the impostures of the *quaestuarii* they only serve as a pretext for levying money, and are a scandal to the faithful. The legate, Jerome Aléandre, replied to the Diet that the mischief arose solely from the bad preachers chosen by the German princes themselves and that the Holy See deserved no blame on this head, for it never ceased reminding those impostors of their duty. With regard to permissions of committing sin, which the Diet considered as involved in the practice of indulgences, the legate observed that no such thing had ever been granted, since the Holy See had never even attributed to the *quaestuarii* the power of remission, except on condition of amendment.<sup>3</sup>

After his condemnation Luther threw off the mask. He broke away altogether and set himself to insult all that was most sacred and honourable in the Church of God. He left no dogma intact and respected no custom. Treading under foot the Christian traditions of fifteen hundred years, he began to preach a new

<sup>1</sup> "Quid profuerit cum illo loqui quibus subsidiis liberemur a Purgatorio, qui totum ferme tollit Purgatorium?"—De primatu Rom. Pont. et de Indulgentiis adversus Lutherum. Extract from the Assertio of Henry VIII. See Rocaberti, *Biblioth. Pont. Maxim.*, t. xiii, Romae, 1698.

<sup>2</sup> Le Plat, *Monum. Conc. Trid.* II, pp. 165 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> Döllinger, *Beiträge zur Politischen, Kirchlichen und Culturgeschichte*, III, 250.

gospel, the beginning and end of which was the worship of self. We need not dwell here on the rapidity with which the new doctrines spread, thanks to the support of temporal princes and the laxity of the German clergy; nor need we describe the vicissitudes that they went through, of opposition and approval, before being accepted in England.

In the latter country, as we know, they ended in the drawing up of a new creed, in the form of thirty-nine Articles. In these the old traditional teaching of the Church was combined with certain new theories, which—so said the authors of those articles—it was needful to introduce in order to get rid of the superstitious beliefs into which the Church had fallen, and to return to the teaching of apostolic times. In words of lofty contempt, the twenty-second Article rejects, in a body, Purgatory, indulgences, and honour paid to pictures and relics. Thus were discarded from the Anglican Creed the doctrine and the practice of indulgences, which had been observed in the universal Church for centuries, and which had contributed to promote the glory of God and the good of souls.

17. The categorical denial of the doctrine, however, had a useful result. The opposition had had a double end in view: first and chiefly, to darken the very notion of an indulgence by representing the doctrine as an erroneous addition to the deposit of the teaching of Christ and his apostles; and, secondly, to dissuade the faithful from a practice denounced as superstitious. Now, on both these points, the effect was just the opposite of what was expected.

As regards the doctrine, the Church issued new declarations in direct contradiction to the heretical teaching. This has already been shown in Leo X's Bulls of 1518 and 1520. Some years later the Œcumenical Council assembled at Trent, in its twenty-

fifth session (held on December 3 and 4, 1563, under Pius IV), defined that the power of granting indulgences has been given by Christ to his Church; that the origin of this divine institution goes back to the very earliest times; that the practice is wholesome and profitable to the Christian people; and that the use of it, having received the authorised approval of Councils, is to be maintained by all means. The Council anathematises all who deny the benefit of indulgences or ignore the power of the Church in their regard.<sup>1</sup> Thus was St Augustine's saying once more verified: "Truth would not be sought for so painfully and anxiously if it had no enemies."<sup>2</sup>

As to the practice, instead of suffering from the attacks, it developed subsequently with wonderful rapidity. From the sixteenth century to our own time there has been a noble emulation between pastors and faithful—the former liberally bestowing what the latter are eager to profit by.

It is difficult for anyone outside the Church to understand the "devout craving" of Catholics for indulgences. People unacquainted with the mysterious operations of grace that are wrought through the sacraments, and by other means appointed by Christ, can see nothing in this eagerness but a pious illusion originating from a deeply seated but unconscious conviction, latent in every soul, that the indulgences gained do not really give what they promise. This is how Mr. Lea<sup>3</sup> tries to explain the avidity of the faithful for indulgences. But experience proves that Catholics have as much confidence in them now as formerly. To be convinced of this, one only needs to reflect on the large crowds that go on pilgrimage to the most renowned shrines of the Catholic world, and to notice with unprejudiced minds the numbers of people who

<sup>1</sup> Denzinger, 989.

<sup>2</sup> Serm. 51, c. vii, n. 11.

<sup>3</sup> P. 500.



besiege the churches where the Portiuncula indulgence may be gained.

It is as consoling, as it is edifying, to read in the lives of the Saints what really ingenious stratagems they used in order to gain as many indulgences as possible; whilst the Church, on her side, seems to have reached the extreme point of liberality in this line of concession.

18. God is ever watching with anxious care over his Church. From the time she sprang forth out of the sacred side of her heavenly Spouse even to the present day, she has been growing ever stronger and spreading forth her mighty influence over the world at large. The malice of men has not been able to stop her progress or to stint her growth. If any of her ministers ever prove a Judas, God has another ready upon whom to bestow the latter's "bishopric."<sup>1</sup> If "a nation choose not to know him, and kingdoms not to call upon his name,"<sup>2</sup> "behold he calleth another nation which he knew not, and the nations which knew not him run to him."<sup>3</sup>

While, then, Luther was rejecting the divine mission he had received in his priestly ordination, and was ruining Christian morality and religion by his denial of human liberty and of penance and good works, St Ignatius of Loyola was writing his wonderful *Spiritual Exercises* in the solitude of Manresa. This book was to contain an entire refutation of the heresiarch's assertions, and was destined to work a real and lasting reform throughout the whole world. Whilst the apostate friar was fulminating his charges of frivolity and imposture against the institution of indulgences, the illustrious founder of the Society of Jesus was giving a striking example of the value that should be placed on holy "Pardons" to his future legion of children. He started from Manresa in

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cviii 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxviii 6.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. lv 5.

pilgrim's garb, poor and unknown, and went to visit Rome and the other sanctuaries at which he could gain the treasure of indulgences. Not content with preaching by example alone, he wrote some time afterwards (A.D. 1540) to the inhabitants of Aspetia, his fellow-countrymen: "Indulgences are such excellent things that I feel unable to praise and exalt their value sufficiently. The only thing left for me to do is to beg and exhort you all, by the love and respect that you owe to God, to esteem them highly, and to seek to profit by them with all possible care."<sup>1</sup>

Some years later a celebrated disciple of St Ignatius, St Peter Canisius, was travelling through that very land of Germany that had been the scene of the great revolt; and whilst he revived esteem and affection for indulgences, he aroused general fervour and brought people back to frequentation of the sacraments.

In 1553, by request of Mary, Queen of Bohemia and wife of the Emperor Maximilian, Julius III granted a Jubilee to the German provinces, and appointed St Peter Canisius to see it carried out. The saint spared neither time nor labour to make it produce good fruit. Helped by a certain number of chosen ecclesiastics, he began by drawing up and publishing some wise regulations as to the mode of keeping the Jubilee; and then he took the greatest pains to explain the efficacious nature of indulgences, thus producing the happiest results on the people.

One other great and holy man among the many raised up by God at that time to oppose the torrent of rebellion must be noticed here—St Pius V, who, in a short pontificate of six years (1566-1572), accomplished such great things in the Church of God as to win immortal glory for himself. Raised to the papal throne, the illustrious Ghislieri exerted his whole

<sup>1</sup> *Cartas de San Ignacio de Loyola*, I, 92.

strength against the abuses introduced by the wickedness of man into the Church, and particularly against those that had been practised in the publication of indulgences. With apostolic liberty he threatened their authors with most severe penalties;<sup>1</sup> but he did not cease on that account to promote the lawful use of pardons. He granted new ones, especially in favour of religious crusades. He promoted by that means the saying of the Rosary and other works of Christian charity,<sup>2</sup> and, in order that acts might correspond to words, he himself gave an example of the esteem in which pardons should be held. Every night he went down from the Vatican palace to St Peter's Basilica, and there devoutly made the "visit of the seven altars," to which numerous indulgences are attached.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To such an extent that Mr. Lea (p. 571) attributes to him "vigour worthy of a Protestant"! See the Constitution of this Pope, *Etsi Dominici Gregis* in Amort, Part I, sect. ii, p. 44, n. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Amort, *op. cit.*, Part I, sect. viii, p. 212. The contradiction which Mr. Lea (p. 427, note on preceding page) finds between this holy Pope's condemnation of abuses and the zeal he displayed in promoting the wholesome use of indulgences, exists nowhere but in that author's imagination.

<sup>3</sup> Rohrbacher, *History of the Church*, Book LXXXVI. The seven altars of the Vatican Basilica are the following: (1) The Madonna called *Gregorian*; (2) SS Processus and Martinian; (3) St Michael Archangel; (4) St Petronilla, Virgin; (5) The Madonna called "of the Column"; (6) The Apostles SS Simon and Jude; (7) St Gregory the Great. The *Raccolta* (p. 555) calls the custom of praying before these altars very ancient, and asserts that it was practised in the time of Innocent II (1130). The privilege of the seven altars has also been granted to other churches in the world. The indulgences attached to this practice come from St Pius V and his successors, Sixtus V, Paul V, Clement VIII and Urban VIII. The devotion of the "seven Churches," or seven Basilicas, at Rome, must also be mentioned. These are St Peter's, St Paul's, St Sebastian's, St John Lateran's, Holy Cross "in Jerusalem," St Lawrence's and St Mary Major's. This devotion owes its origin to the piety of the faithful, who began to frequent particularly these churches, and is enriched with many indulgences. It has been practised by saints—e.g., St Joseph Calasanctius, St Philip Neri and St Charles Borromeo. See Beringer, *Der Besuch der Sieben Hauptkirchen*, u.s.w. Die Ablässe, p. 387.

19. We know how rapidly Lutheranism spread in the northern regions of Europe, and laid hold of people and rulers alike.

Yet the spark of true faith was never quite extinguished even in those parts, and eloquent witnesses to the truth arose from time to time. As regards the Catholic teaching on indulgences or pardons, we may specially mention the Archduchess Anne Catherine de Gonzaga, who gave up all the splendours of court life to consecrate herself to God's service. Under the name of Anne Juliana, she put on the livery of the Servants of Mary, and was the restorer of that Order in Germany.

She was born in 1566, of William de Gongaza and Eleanor of Austria, daughter of the Emperor Ferdinand I. Whilst quite young, when thought to be dying, she was restored to health by the Blessed Virgin. Her pious mother, out of gratitude, brought her up in a specially religious way. When a maiden, Anne Catherine gave herself up to exercises of piety, specially devoting herself to gaining indulgences for the souls in Purgatory, for which she felt most tender compassion. She joined confraternities established for that object, whose rules she would scrupulously observe.

She was married at fifteen to the Archduke Ferdinand, Count of the Tyrol, with whom she led a holy life. Left a widow at twenty-nine, she rejected offers of marriage from both the Emperor Rudolph II and his brother Mathias, wishing to use her liberty in practising even greater devotion than before. She often followed the Stations of the Cross on foot along the road from Innsbruck to Halle.

As the Order of Servites had disappeared from the Tyrol in consequence of the Reformation, she set herself to re-establish it in that country. She herself received the holy habit of Our Lady of Dolours, in

company with her eldest daughter Mary, who had followed her example by refusing the hand of Philip II of Spain, in order to consecrate herself to God. The Venerable Anne Juliana died full of merits in the eyes of God, on August 3, 1621, and her memory is kept in special veneration in the Servite Order.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Vita et Gesta Rev. et Ser. Annae Julianae Arch. Austriae*, Oeniponti, 1672. Also *Annal. Ord. Serv. B.V.M.*, t. ii, pp. 495 *sqq.* See also V.R. Fr. Joachim Dourche, O.S.M., *Vie de la Vén. Anne Julienne d'Autriche*.



## CHAPTER IX

### LOSS OR GAIN

#### *Indulgences in our own Day*

"For the wages of sin is death; but the grace of God life everlasting in Christ Jesus our Lord."—*Rom. vi 23.*

The Roman Congregations—Authentic books—The Jubilee extended to the whole Catholic world—The Jubilee of 1825—The Jubilees of 1900 and 1925—Liberality of the Church in our own day—Difficulties exaggerated—We are the younger children of the Church—Compassion of the Church for human weakness—Indulgences make us value the Passion of Christ—They encourage the spirit of prayer—They promote the fear of God—They inspire feelings of charity—The heroic act—Its many advantages—Good effects of indulgences—Evil results of Protestantism—Erroneous notions—The study of history—Indulgences supply a need of human nature—Epilogue.

IT might have been expected that the controversy raised by Luther and his disciples, discussed in our last chapter, would have stemmed the liberality of the Church in granting indulgences. Yet quite a contrary result followed: the prelates became yet more generous than before, whilst the faithful proved themselves more anxious than ever to gain them. The attack also had a further happy result: it induced the Church to give a systematic organisation to the dispensing of indulgences, and to establish a special ecclesiastical tribunal for the purpose.

The Council of Trent had really made the first movement in this direction, when it had ordered

the Bishops (as we said in the last chapter) to seek out abuses, to bring them before the provincial synods and then to submit them to the Pope, that he might point out the most fitting remedy.<sup>1</sup> But the imminent death of Pius IV had caused the last session, in which the question of indulgences had been mooted, to be hastily closed, thus preventing the Fathers of the Council from going into more detail. The assembly then broke up in 1563.

For various reasons the measures prescribed by the Council could not be carried out at once. For one thing, in some countries it was impossible to assemble the provincial Councils before which abuses were to be denounced; and, for another, distance prevented certain Bishops from communicating with each other except at rare intervals. Hence, the decisions come to did not produce the good effects anticipated by the Fathers of the Council.

Hence, some years afterwards, Clement VIII (1592-1605), guided by the spirit of the decree, named a Commission, consisting of several Cardinals and prelates remarkable for zeal and piety. Their office was to assist the Pope in the dispensation of indulgences, according to the Lateran Canons and the Decree of Trent. Baronius, in his works, mentions this Commission, and Bellarmine speaks of it highly.

Paul V (1605-1621), successor to Clement VIII, had been on this Commission as Cardinal. He continued his predecessor's work, suppressing a number of apocryphal indulgences set up by confraternities and religious Orders. It was not, however, until 1669 that Clement IX established a special Congregation, called the "Sacred Congregation of Holy Relics and Indulgences," consisting of a Cardinal Prefect, several other Cardinals, a certain number of

<sup>1</sup> Sess. XXV., Decr. *De Indulg.*

"consultors," and a secretary, all named by the Pope.

In recent years, owing to necessary changes having been introduced into the working of all the Roman Congregations, the power to deal with the concession of indulgences has belonged at different times to different sections of the Roman Curia. Pius X in 1904 joined the original Congregation established by Clement IX to the Congregation of Rites, since there was a close affinity between the work of both.<sup>1</sup> The real effect of the change was that the same Cardinal became Prefect of both Congregations, and governed each according to its own rules and customs. In 1908 the same Pope annexed the authority concerning indulgences to the Holy Office.<sup>2</sup> Benedict XV, in his allocution of March 22, 1917, made a further change. The department dealing with the concession of indulgences was taken from the Holy Office, and became an additional duty placed on the Sacred Penitentiary, but the Holy Office is still competent to decide questions about the *doctrine* of indulgences since it is the office of this Congregation to decide all questions of faith and morals. This is the present arrangement which is now stabilised in the Code.<sup>3</sup>

The business of the officials of the Sacred Penitentiary with regard to indulgences is to solve difficulties, enact laws, and remove any abuses that may arise. On any very important question a report is presented to the Holy Father through the officials, who are received in special audience. For less im-

<sup>1</sup> Motu Proprio, *Quae in Ecclesiae bonum*, January 28, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Sapienti Consilio, June 29, 1908.

<sup>3</sup> *Cod. Jur. Can.* 259, § 2: "Eiusdem insuper est de iis omnibus judicare quae spectant ad usum et concessionem indulgentiarum, salvo jure S Officii videndi ea quae doctrinam dogmaticam circa easdem indulgentias vel circa novas orationes et devotiones respiciunt."

portant matters, the Cardinal Prefect is invested with powers specially attached to his office; he can resolve certain difficulties and even grant certain indulgences. In its solemn or full meetings the Congregation studies the most important doubts, and solves the most serious difficulties. On these occasions, one or more of the consultors, who have been instructed beforehand to study the question, present their *votum*, showing the result of their researches, with the reasons for their opinions, which helps the members of the assembly in coming to a decision.<sup>1</sup>

2. One of the most important acts of the Roman authorities has been the publication of a collection of prayers and other works enriched with indulgences by the Holy See. It goes by the name of the *Raccolta*, and is prefaced by some general information, drawn up in short and formal style, treating of the various decisions promulgated by the Holy See about indulgences.

Before the year 1877 the editions of this book were only semi-official, being the private work of one "consultor." But from that date the *Raccolta* was published under the immediate supervision of the Cardinal Prefect and by the Pope's orders.<sup>2</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> The doubts proposed to the Sacred Congregation should have a practical bearing, otherwise no answer is elicited. Thus in 1737 the Congregation refused to resolve the question which was then being warmly discussed among theologians, whether the fulfilment of the prescribed conditions is sufficient for gaining indulgences, or other satisfactory works are needed. The answer was: "Dilata et ad mentem Eminentissimi Praefecti, quae est ut praesens causa amplius non proponatur." (Cloquet, *Archiv. of the S. C. of Ind.* 1862, p. 32.) This does not mean, as Mr. Lea makes out (p. 129), that "no further inquiries must be made" about that question, but only that it should not be proposed to that Congregation, although it may well be discussed and inquired into by theologians.

<sup>2</sup> The edition of 1898 contained the following approval: "SS. D. N. Leo PP. XIII sua apostolica auctoritate eaque proinde uti genuina et authentica sylloge indulgentiarum hactenus pro universis Christi fidelibus et pro quibusdam eorum coetibus ibidem designatis concessarum ab omnibus est retinenda."

contains all the concessions made in a general way in favour of all the faithful without limit of time. If any difference is found among the various editions, a decree warns us always to refer to the *latest*. Besides having the pontifical sanction, this work is particularly worthy of commendation for the care with which it is edited, and the strict attention paid to omitting every concession of doubtful origin.

We need hardly remark how desirable it is for every Christian to possess a copy of this valuable collection.<sup>1</sup> By using the indulgenced prayers contained in it everybody may pay off his own debts and help the suffering souls in Purgatory; for every indulgence included in this work is applicable to the souls of the departed.<sup>2</sup>

There has also been published an important collection of more than four hundred and fifty decrees and decisions, issued during two centuries in reply to questions about indulgences and relics. The documents are taken from the archives of the old Congregation of Indulgences, and the collection was published in 1883 by order of Leo XIII, who gave it his approbation and pronounced it authentic. The title of the work is, *Decreta Authentica Sacrae Congregationis Indulgentiis Sacrisque Reliquiis praepositae*.<sup>3</sup> To this publication has now been added another work called *Rescripta Authentica*,<sup>4</sup> which contains, besides 425 answers given by the Congregation as to indulgences and similar matters, numerous summaries of indulgences

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cans. 919 and 1388. All collections of indulgenced prayers, etc., need special ecclesiastical approbation.

<sup>2</sup> Decree of September 30, 1852. Cf. *Cod. Jur. Can.* 930. The official edition of the *Raccolta* is published in Rome, Tipografia Poliglotta della S.C. di Propaganda Fede.

<sup>3</sup> Regensburg, Pustet, 1883.

<sup>4</sup> Published by the Rev. J. Schneider, S.J., Regensburg: Pustet, 1885.



granted by the Popes to churches or oratories, religious Orders, confraternities, etc.

Now, as formerly, the competent authority is most careful in suppressing any abuses that may arise either through bad faith or superstition. We have already pointed out<sup>1</sup> how all indulgences of a thousand or more years' extension have been revoked. At the same time, at the risk of offending some persons superstitiously attached to the recitation of certain formulas, the Congregation mercilessly suppressed several indulgences commonly held to be authentic and in use among the faithful.<sup>2</sup>

As an example of a practice of devotion forbidden by the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences, we may cite a pretended revelation to St Bridget, St Elizabeth of Hungary, and St Mechtilde as to the number of blows received by our Lord in his scourging, with other details, such as the number of drops of blood that he shed during his passion, his executioners, etc. It was declared that, in return for saying certain prayers in honour of these things for fifteen years, the following favours might be received: plenary indulgence with remission of all sins; deliverance from Purgatory; a death equivalent to martyrdom; the salvation of one's own relatives up to the fourth degree; the announcement of one's own death forty days beforehand; in short, entire deliverance from all evils in this world and the next. The Congregation condemned this imposture, regardless of the terrible punishments threatened on all who, heedless of the marvellous facts alleged in support of the concession, should presume to say that it does not come from God.<sup>3</sup>

A mere glance at the documents and decisions issued

<sup>1</sup> Part II, c. vii, n. 20, p. 422.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Analecta Eccles.*, Ann. VII, Mart. 1899, pp. 112, *sqq.*

<sup>3</sup> *Analecta Eccles.*, l.c. pp. 116, 117.

by the Sacred Congregation will be enough to convince the reader of three important facts: first, of the great care taken by the Church to grant no indulgences except for a supernatural end and on condition of certain pious works done; secondly, of the liberality shown by the Church in dispensing these her spiritual treasures, which liberality has gone on increasing rather than diminishing; and, thirdly, of her constant anxiety to separate the wheat from the tares that get mixed with it by the enemy's artifice.

3. Of these truths we have a striking example in the institution of Jubilees. We have seen above how the Sovereign Pontiffs, in the Middle Ages, granted on more and more easy terms dispensations from coming in person to Rome as time went on.<sup>1</sup> Boniface IX had granted this favour in perpetuity to certain towns; and, at the Jubilee of 1500, Alexander VI extended it to all the faithful. In time this exceptional measure became the general rule, the Popes adopting the custom of extending the Jubilee granted in Rome to the whole Catholic world. This Jubilee outside Rome has generally to be gained in the following year and within a shorter period; usually six months. This was the plan followed by Benedict XIV in 1751, Pius VI in 1776, and Leo XII in 1826, but the recent 1925 Jubilee was extended to the whole world in 1926 for the full period of twelve months.

In 1875 Pius IX made the gaining of the great indulgence yet easier. He granted it immediately to the faithful all over the world, since for various reasons it could not be held with the accustomed solemnities in Rome.<sup>2</sup> Leo XIII adopted the same plan in his three "Extraordinary" Jubilees: the first on his elevation to the See of Peter, and the other two in 1882 and

<sup>1</sup> Part II, c. vi, n. 18, p. 380.

<sup>2</sup> Beringer, *Die Ablässe*, p. 437, Paderborn, 1893.

1886 respectively. Pope Pius X confirmed this practice with regard to the Jubilee which he granted in memory of the fiftieth anniversary of the definition of the Immaculate Conception.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, we may safely say that in these latter years there has been no place in the world and no class of people that could not profit by the Jubilee indulgence, so much the more as special measures had been taken to make things easy for the sick, the aged and children; for travellers, prisoners, soldiers and sailors; and, in short, for everyone legitimately hindered from fulfilling the ordinary conditions.

4. Certain anti-Catholic writers<sup>2</sup> have asserted that, since the time of Luther, "the Popes have been more sparing in the exercise of this power of granting indulgences," as if the Reformation had caused them to slacken in their distribution of the sacred treasures. This statement is quite inaccurate, as we have now shown; grants, since the Reformation, having considerably increased rather than diminished.

On the other hand, the eagerness of the faithful in availing themselves of these sacred treasures has not grown cold, as some would have it to be. If fewer now go to Rome for the Jubilee, on account of the ease with which they may gain it at home, quite enough still visit the Eternal City for us to draw the conclusion that modern Catholics hold these heavenly gifts in the same high esteem. This was particularly shown during Leo XII's Jubilee of 1825.

The troubles caused by the French Revolution throughout Europe and the death of Pope Pius VI had made impossible the celebration of the Jubilee of 1800. Twenty-four years later, though a relative peace had been granted, yet many, both Romans and

<sup>1</sup> Encycl. *Ad diem illum*, February 2, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Rees, in his *Cyclopaedia*, under the word "Indulgence."

strangers, were opposed to the solemnity of the Jubilee taking place. Many feared lest it should inundate Rome with a host of banditti and outlaws clothed under the garb of mendicant pilgrims, whilst the Pope's treasurer was also in great alarm as to the probable effect of an inpouring of needy people on the Papal exchequer.

Nevertheless, Leo XII ordered the Jubilee to take place. The "Holy Door" was opened as usual; and a story is told that, as Cardinal Castiglioni (then "Great Penitentiary"), an old schoolfellow and friend of the Pope's, handed the silver hammer to His Holiness, Leo could not resist whispering into his ear a playful reminder of the day when they two had had a fight over the silver candlesticks they were carrying, as acolytes, fifty years before, in a solemn procession held at Osimo for the Jubilee of Pius VI<sup>1</sup>. Castiglioni succeeded his friend on the Papal throne as Pius VIII.

This Jubilee was most numerous attended. The account given of it in Cardinal Wiseman's *Recollections of the Four Last Popes*, to which we refer readers interested in details, is a full refutation of the statement made by some writers<sup>2</sup> that the Jubilee of 1825 was a failure. The Cardinal, after a description of the crowds received into the *Trinità dei Pellegrini*, adds: "Scarcely ever did Rome present a more motley crowd, arrayed in every variety of costume, from the sober and almost clerical dress of the German peasant to the rainbow hues of the Abruzzi or Campagna."<sup>3</sup>

A fact should here be mentioned which happened on December 17, the year following (1826), in the little town of Migné, in the diocese of Poitiers, in France. It proves that God's hand is not shortened that it cannot save.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Virg. Prinzivalli, *Gli Anni Santi*, Rome, 1899, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., by the *New Popular Encyclopedia*, under the word "Jubilee."

<sup>3</sup> See "Leo XII," chap. iv.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. lix 1.

When at the close of the exercises of the Jubilee, which, as we said, was that year extended to the world, a cross was being solemnly planted and the preacher was reminding his hearers of the marvellous apparition of a cross, with which the emperor Constantine had been favoured more than fifteen centuries before, a large shining silver cross was suddenly seen towering above the whole congregation. The cross was of perfectly regular shape, about one hundred feet long, and it was raised horizontally about two hundred feet above the square that lies in front of the church. All the bystanders, about three thousand people in all, including the parish priest, the mayor and his assistant and other notable persons, saw the miracle.

The religious emotion which seized the crowd can easier be understood than described. Some of the men present fell on their knees, others raised their hands to heaven, while some who had till then resisted grace declared themselves converted. The cross remained in that position for half an hour, retaining all the time its shape and colour. It only disappeared when the faithful entered the church to receive the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

The fact was duly authenticated five days later (December 22) in a report sent by the parish priest to the Bishop of Poitiers, Mgr. Bouillé, who thought of acquainting the Pope with all that had happened. On April 18, 1827, Leo XII, after having examined the particulars of the case, stated that, taking all the circumstances of that event, it did not seem possible to attribute it to any natural cause. Later on (August 18) he declared that personally he was convinced of the truth of the miracle. He then presented the church of Migné with a golden cross, containing a particle of the true Cross, and also granted a plenary indulgence to be gained in that church on the third Sunday of



Advent, which was the day fixed by the Bishop for keeping the memory of that miraculous event.<sup>1</sup>

5. The political state of Italy prevented Pius IX, who was absent from Rome in 1849, from promulgating the Jubilee due for 1850, and the same circumstances hindered his giving all the usual solemnity to that held in 1875.

Twenty-five years later, though the political situation in Rome had not changed, Leo XIII determined to give the Catholic world the benefit of as solemn a Jubilee as the existing state of things would allow. By the Bull *Properante ad Exitum Saeculo*, published May 2, 1899, he therefore promulgated the twenty-second "Ordinary" Jubilee, and ordered it to be kept with all possible solemnity. Thanks to his extraordinary longevity, the Holy Father had been an eyewitness of Leo XII's Jubilee, and remembered with admiration the good effects produced by that Holy Year. He mentions this in his Bull, and particularly refers to the cheerful earnestness of the pilgrims in visiting the appointed Basilicas, to the apostolic zeal of outdoor preachers, to the many voices raised in holy song through the streets of the Eternal City, and to the grand pontifical cortège, which had all made a great impression upon him, then a youth of fifteen.

Leo XIII, wishing and hoping to make the Jubilee of 1900 an important and very profitable event to the Christian world, and associating it with a special act of universal homage to our divine Redeemer, summoned all who could possibly undertake the journey to Rome. He put forward as a special motive for going there the wonderful manner in which Rome has been chosen and appointed by Christ as the centre of Christendom and the seat of his own Vicar. "To depart

<sup>1</sup> Rohrbacher, l. xci, § ii, vol. xv, pp. 429 sqq. Torino, 1878.

from the faith of Rome," he said, "is to depart from Christ."

But, though he had hoped much from this Jubilee, his invitation produced even greater fruit than he had hoped, for the faithful of all nations eagerly responded to it, proving by their fervour that faith in the "great pardons" is no smaller now than in bygone days. In some respects, of course, owing to the fact of the occupation of Rome by the Italians, the public celebrations could not be carried out with the same solemnity as of old, especially as regards outdoor ceremonies and public manifestations. But the crowds in the Basilicas, where the pilgrims of all ranks, lay and ecclesiastic, elbowed one another from morning to night, gave ample and touching proof of the enduringness of Catholic faith and devotion to our Lord and his Vicar on earth.

In every respect, therefore, this Jubilee was an eloquent answer to detractors, for the zeal shown by Catholics to profit by it was a proof of their esteem of the sacred pardons.

The Jubilee of 1925 was proclaimed by the Bull *Infinita Dei* on May 29, 1924. The intention of the Holy Father, for which the faithful were to pray, was that peace "not merely written in treaties, but inscribed in the hearts of men," should be restored to the whole world; secondly, that "all non-Catholics may seek refuge in the true Church of Christ"; thirdly, "that the affairs in Palestine may be finally settled in a way that is consistent with the most sacred rights of the Catholic religion." The papal intention thus reflected the troubles of the times, in a world still disunited by the effects of the great war which had devastated Europe.

The Holy Father made a special appeal to non-Catholics to return to the One Church of God: "We

desire to see reunited to Rome those Churches which have been cut off by calamitous and age-long divisions. Nothing could give us greater happiness than to see those Churches, or at least many of their adherents, returning to the one fold of Christ. Nothing could give us greater consolation than to embrace them lovingly, and on the occasion of this great Jubilee to number them amongst our most dear children." The usual conditions, which have for centuries been imposed for the Jubilee Indulgence, together with the usual suspension of other indulgences during the Holy Year, were indicated in the Bull, and carefully interpreted by subsequent Constitutions.<sup>1</sup> A feature of this Jubilee was the privilege granted to many classes of people (*e.g.*, invalids, working people, convent boarders and scholars) to gain the Indulgence, even during the Holy Year, by observing the conditions to be determined by their own bishops. A further indication of the increasing liberality of the Church in the concession of indulgences was the extension of the Jubilee throughout the whole of 1926, instead of six months only, the period of extension on previous occasions. As was to be expected, great numbers of people visited Rome during the Holy Year. Pilgrimages were arranged by dioceses and religious associations, the cost of travel being reduced to a minimum in order that the poorest might have the opportunity of seeing the Vicar of Christ and the Holy City of Rome.<sup>2</sup>

6. The question may now arise: Why is the Church so liberal at the present day in her grants of indulgences? Never was such a prodigality witnessed

<sup>1</sup> July 5, 1924, July 15, 1924, July 30, 1924. Cf. A.A.S., vol. xvi, 305, 309, 316.

<sup>2</sup> An official account of the proceedings of this Jubilee has been published under the title *Cronistoria dell' anno santo MCMXXV. Appunti storici. Dati statistici. Atti ufficiali.* Roma, 1928.

in ages past. New grants come out every day. The *Raccolta* is growing in bulk and size at every new edition, and some indulgences surely seem out of proportion, since for short prayers many years' pardons are often granted and sometimes even a plenary indulgence. Is not this an abuse worse than any the Church has ever reproved ?<sup>1</sup>

Some authors reply to this question that it is very difficult to gain an indulgence; that it is one thing to say that the Church grants abundant indulgences, and another to assert that the faithful are sure to gain them; and that, at any rate, it is extremely rare to gain an indulgence to the full extent of the grant. As to a plenary indulgence, they say in dogmatic tone that only a very small number *can* gain it, and those who actually *do* gain it are still fewer—perhaps some holy man in a hidden corner of the world, or some recluse dead to this earthly life and to his own passions.

7. Such a view as this needs refuting, being far from honourable to the mystic Body of Christ, or profitable to its members. The Church must indeed have fallen away from holiness if, among her three hundred millions of children, not more than one or two can be found capable of profiting by their Saviour's satisfactory merits in such a manner as to have all penalty due for their sins remitted. And, again, if, as this view would imply, only those who have already reached nearly the summit of perfection have a chance of obtaining the full remission of that penalty, it is use-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lea (p. 258) did not see that the above words in our first English edition (p. 340) do not express our own opinion, but merely propose an objection to be considered. He uses those words to support a thesis of his own—*i.e.*, that laxity in morals has crept into the Church. He even compares our expression here with one that we have used in another place (p. 329 of said work) about the Church's liberality in the matter of indulgences, but giving it a totally different sense from our own.

less for the ordinary run of mankind to try to gain this kind of indulgence at all. Why, then, in that case, does the Church offer it to all her children without distinction, giving them to understand that they may gain it easily?

These exaggerations of the difficulty of gaining indulgences may appear at first sight to proceed, from zeal, to be calculated to enhance their value and to induce the faithful to make extraordinary efforts to gain them. But they have in reality a most discouraging effect by frightening people away from the attempt of doing what seems so nearly impossible. As St Antoninus of Florence used to say, this sort of teaching is "building up to destroy, not to edify."

Now, in what, after all, does this supposed great difficulty consist? To gain a plenary indulgence it is necessary (1) to be in a state of grace; (2) to have no attachment to venial sin; (3) faithfully to perform certain appointed works.

Most certainly the difficulty does not lie in the third condition, as a little goodwill suffices to accomplish the very simple works usually prescribed. Neither can the first be called very difficult; for, though we are, of course, never absolutely certain whether we be "worthy of love or of hatred,"<sup>1</sup> yet a great many of the faithful, living as they do in the fear of God and in watchfulness over themselves, may be morally sure that they are in the grace and friendship of Christ.

The difficulty, then, must really lie in the second condition: "to have no attachment to venial sin." Now, we should be careful to distinguish properly between *falling* into venial sin, which is an *act* and may be the result of long habit or mere human weakness, and *being attached* to venial sin, which is a *state of the*

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. ix 1.



*soul*, and implies a certain amount of inordinate affection for creatures offensive to our Creator.

No man, however holy, except our Blessed Lord and his Mother, can boast of being wholly exempt from venial sin. But a great number may be, and actually are, exempt from all attachment to venial sin. Take the case of many a faithful soul anxious to please God, and strengthening this holy desire by almost daily reception of the Bread of Life—are we to suppose that such souls are voluntarily attached to faults which, though they do not entail damnation, are, nevertheless, displeasing to the Divine Majesty?

As a matter of fact it were better for the faithful, rather than spread such ill-grounded and unauthorised opinions, to go back by examination and reflection to the heart,<sup>1</sup> and work up the will to be ready to walk in the path of God's justice and judgement. Thus shall they gain, either for themselves or for the souls in Purgatory, those heavenly riches which holy Church offers them from her spiritual treasury. And if at times they fail in their intent, not on this account are their efforts vain, for the indulgence in this case from plenary becomes partial, and though they receive not the pardon of all their debt, yet they usually do not fail in obtaining the remission of at least a part of it.

8. Since, then, the difficulty of gaining indulgences cannot be accepted as the motive for their being now so much more numerous than formerly, where shall we find the reason of the present liberality of the Church compared with the sparingness of ages gone by? It would indeed be presumption to sit in judgement on the spirit and intentions of the Church; yet it may be lawful to offer here some suggestion on the point.

We of the present day, as related to the faithful before us, are the "youngest-born" of the Church.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xlii 8; also *cf.* Ps. cvii 2.

We are, so to speak, the labourers in the vineyard who came at the eleventh hour and worked in the cool of the evening, but who, nevertheless, had the same wages as those who had toiled (as did our predecessors in the faith) through the heat of the day. Thus does the Church show these later generations more leniency than she allowed to the earlier ones, as a mother who indulges her weaker children in things that she does not grant to the stronger ones. She gives us the same reward that she gave to those who suffered all the severities of canonical penance, even as the husbandman who gives the same wages to the early as to the late comers.

The Church, then, acts with us as a kind mother who has remitted much of her former severity not in the matter of indulgences only, but generally in all religious observances. She has relaxed much of the ancient rigour of fasting and abstinence, of the duty of assisting at Mass, of frequenting the sacraments, of observing Christian festivals. Does it not seem as if she would facilitate for men the entrance into the kingdom of heaven almost against their own will; as if she were afraid not to complete the number of the elect and leave fruitless the precious Blood of her Divine Spouse?

9. But does all this mitigation justify the charge of laxity? Certainly not.

In the first place, the Church is but imitating God's infinite goodness, who is more ready to forgive than to punish, who welcomes his prodigal son with tokens of almost untimely joy, who forgets to upbraid, who kills his fatted calf in sign of joy and gladness and adorns that son with the same linen garments that he had worn before his desertion.

Then she takes into consideration, on the one hand, the growing weakness of human nature, and, on the

other, the new and more fierce temptations that harass her children. It seems hardly correct to say that man is able now to bear as much as he could in past ages. Whether it is that his physical constitution in general has grown weaker, so that man is no longer able to endure all that he could bear in the past, or that the ideas and manners of modern society are too strongly opposed to former conceptions of penance, or that the two causes combined have brought about a change in the ordinary conditions of human life: whatever the reason, in short, of the slackening of the primitive penitential spirit, certain it is that it would now be difficult to bring back the world to the practice of ancient canonical penances or even of the lesser medieval austerities.

And to this we must add the saddening, yet undoubted, fact of a general cooling in charity and a considerable weakening of the spirit of faith. There are, of course, some loving and staunch Christians left who have not suffered from the breath of the destructive chill and who are living examples of the ancient faith and charity; but they are unhappily rare, and must be looked upon rather as trophies of God's power in souls than as captains to be followed by all.

Then there are the innumerable and grave temptations to which we are now exposed: the assaults of diabolic spirits, more numerous and fiercer now than formerly; the attractions of a society which presents itself as the one source of all happiness; the multiplied attacks against the Church, her institutions and her ministers; all which, no doubt, are calculated to make falling easier and resistance much harder.

Can we, then, wonder if the Church, just as she has multiplied opportunities for obtaining the pardon of offences in the Sacrament of Penance, has made it easier to get remission of penalty for sin by means of indulgences? A little careful consideration of the

motives here indicated for her modern practice in the matter cannot, we believe, fail to convince any candid person that the spirit of Christ, who promised to be with his Church to the end of time, is guiding her now, as ever, in her mode of dispensing his sacred treasures. What God does is best done; and therefore what the Church decrees in his name is best suited to the needs of the time.

10. This will appear yet more clear if we glance for a moment at some of the particular benefits accruing to the faithful from the use of indulgences.

First of all, indulgences cannot fail to inspire, in all who try to gain them, great reverence and love for the sufferings of Christ and his saints, through which all pardon comes to us. Bossuet<sup>1</sup> writes: "To gain indulgences, it is necessary to unite oneself in spirit to the tears, sighs, groanings, mortifications, labours and sufferings of all the martyrs and all the saints; and, above all, to the agony, dereliction and whole passion and sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord, in whom and by whom all the satisfactions and good works of the saints are accepted by his Father."

11. Besides, indulgences, and particularly those attached to certain prayers, are a great means of arousing the faithful to recollection of Almighty God's presence, to union with him, and to humble submission to his will: in short, of fostering a spirit of prayer. How many prayers are said, throughout the Catholic world, owing to a desire for gaining indulgences, which might otherwise not be said at all, which however bring down many favours upon the sinful world! Many of these are but short ejaculatory prayers, yet full of depth and meaning in their brevity. Take, for instance, St Francis's favourite ejaculation, "My God

<sup>1</sup> *Instruction nécessaire pour le Jubilé*. A. 1, Liège, 1863. t. viii, p. 287.

and my All ! ” or the one so often used by St Leonard of Port Maurice, and now so common with the sick and dying, “ My Jesus, mercy ! ” What good must not such words, constantly on the lips, do to the heart ! And again, how ready must God be to bestow grace on those who address him with such an invocation as the well-known one: “ In all things may the most holy, the most just, and the most lovable will of God be done, praised and exalted above all for ever ! ”<sup>1</sup> If indulgences had no other effect than that of turning men’s hearts to God and so making them realise their utter dependence on him, their own nothingness and his greatness, that would be enough to prove them to be no “ frauds and deceptions,” but rather living fountains of spiritual favours to the faithful.

Nor should it be objected that the motive which prompts the recitation of such prayers is not worthy of God, since a man who prays in order to gain the indulgences does so to the end that he may be delivered from temporal pain. Indeed, we dare assert that nine-tenths of the faithful daily raise their hearts to God by prayer to the end of obtaining from him some favour, who would not otherwise do so. And there is nothing blamable in this. A love of God that should make us lose sight altogether of our own interests has never been the genuine teaching of the Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup>

Many are kept within the bounds of religion through the fear that God might abandon them and make them lose their temporal prosperity, were they to give up religious practices. Yet, who will dare condemn this impelling—not final—motive, or assert that it is an outrage to the divine Majesty ? If, then, some are

<sup>1</sup> For the indulgences attached to these ejaculations, see *Raccolta*.

<sup>2</sup> See the propositions of Michael de Molinos condemned by Innocent XI in the Constitution *Coelestis Pastor*, November 20, 1687. Denzinger, 1221 *sqq.*



induced to pray by the hope that they will lessen their temporal punishment, who will find fault with them? It is one thing that we should be induced to pray by this motive, and quite another that we should pray solely for this end. The first is right; the second is alien from the mind of the Church and the practice of good Christians.

12. There are yet other practical effects, however, of the use of indulgences, and one of these is to nourish in souls that most necessary of all divine gifts, which is the constant fear of God. We mean that chaste and filial fear which is "the beginning of wisdom," which makes the saints tremble at the very thought of the smallest sin, which gives joy to the heart and peace at death.<sup>1</sup>

Indulgences keep alive in us this righteous fear, because they constantly remind us that every debt we have must be paid to the last farthing. Hence they make us dread the suffering that must be endured in Purgatory for even the lighter faults that we have not expiated here below, and oblige us therefore to keep our conscience pure and undefiled.

Their effect upon us, in short, is the exact opposite of what Mr. Lea represents it to be, when he says, speaking of confession and indulgences, that "such a periodical squaring of accounts with God through his minister, and such a release from all the consequences of sin, in return for performances that cost so little, can hardly fail to blunt the conception of the heinousness of offending God."<sup>2</sup> Certainly this might be the result if an indulgence were a sort of *magic formula* as our author supposes it to be in the opinion of the uneducated masses.<sup>3</sup> But, if Mr. Lea has met with such a view of things among his own acquaintances, our

<sup>1</sup> See Eccclus. i 11, 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Page 578.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 579.

priests who give themselves up to the ministry of the confessional, and our missionaries who are in personal contact with the illiterate working classes, can confidently set the result of their experience against his. Among Catholics, in whom faith is alive, there is a deep conviction of the odiousness of sin, which is precisely the effect of their belief in indulgences, because this belief makes the penalty due to sin stand out more clearly, and shows them the difficulty of making due reparation for it.

That the works prescribed should be easy to perform is of little consequence. They are worth far more than they cost, as the smallest act done for the love of God outweighs the value of the whole material world. Moreover, those works suggest a great deal beyond what is implied in their performance, as—if they are to be a means of gaining the indulgence—a state of grace is absolutely required in the doer of them, and, in the case of a plenary grant, also an aversion to venial sin.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, it is only a prejudiced mind—such as is common with the enemies of the Church—that can believe in the accusation made against indulgences, that to the mass of the people they are a mere form, with which heart and conscience have but little to do, and by means of which old debts are got rid of only that new ones may be contracted.<sup>2</sup> The truth is that they incline the faithful to detest their past sins and avoid future ones.

<sup>1</sup> See above, Part I, c. ii, n. 9, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Such are the opinions that commend themselves to Mr. Lea (p. 578). But the *Tablet* of April 17, 1897, very justly remarks: "The sinner who loves a smooth part, and yet troubles himself about indulgences, is a curiosity with whom we Catholics are not acquainted. The penitential nun, and the devout, fasting and abstaining working-woman, are those who are most eager to gain indulgences."

13. But if faith is the foundation, and fear of God the support, of our spiritual life, charity is its crown; that charity which is patient, benign, which worketh no evil, which beareth all things; that charity which “never falleth away, whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed”;<sup>1</sup> that charity which, to be true, manifests itself by the love of our neighbour, since it is impossible that we should love God whom we see not, if we hate our neighbour whom we see.<sup>2</sup> This very charity is indeed the best fruit of indulgences. For by gaining indulgences we are able to deliver the souls of our brethren suffering in Purgatory. We have only to offer our satisfactory works to God, and we are certain that he will turn them to account for the souls detained in the purifying flames. Dante remembers this when he tells us that from here we may greatly help the souls that are in the other world.<sup>3</sup>

But indulgences move Christians to practise yet greater works of charity than this. There are very many who turn to helping others before they have made full satisfaction for themselves. They forget their own miseries in the thought of their departed brethren, and gain Jubilees, multiply the *Portiuncula* visits, and do other indulgenced works, that they may succour the souls in Purgatory, even whilst their own debt to God is but partly paid. And this charity is all the greater because very often they are praying for unknown and unbefriended souls—perhaps even for some who are bearing the penalty of offences committed against themselves. Thus do they fulfil the highest law of charity in returning good for evil.

14. Others go further still, and sacrifice to God, in favour of the souls in Purgatory, all the indulgences

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Cor. xiii 8.

<sup>2</sup> See 1 John iv 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Purgat. cant.* iii.

that they may gain, and all the satisfactory works that they may do in the whole course of their lives. Sometimes they include in this offering, as far as God may choose to accept it, the sacrifice of whatever indulgences may be applied to them by others after their death. In this way they really do as generous an act as, in the days of slavery, a slave would have done by sacrificing his own chance of being ransomed, and causing sums, which he knew might have been destined for purchasing his freedom, to be spent in delivering some of his fellow-slaves instead.

This offering is called, in popular language, the Heroic Act in favour of the souls in Purgatory.

It is no novelty in the Church, for St Gertrude made it in the thirteenth century, and with great results, as was made known to her in a vision. One day, when the saint had offered to God all her pious work in a spirit of atonement for the soul of one of the departed, she saw that these works were being presented before the throne of the Almighty in the form of most acceptable gifts, to the immense joy of the celestial court. Our Saviour seemed to accept them with great benevolence, as if he were pleased to have such means to alleviate the suffering souls. Moreover, at the presentation of each good work, he made a gift to the saint in exchange, so that her pious actions received a twofold benefit.<sup>1</sup>

Other saints have done the same thing; but the practice became more widely known in the eighteenth century, when it was welcomed by many great and noble souls, among whom St Leonard of Port Maurice is specially deserving of mention.

This holy man, who spent his life in the work of missions, used to form an intention every morning of

<sup>1</sup> *Vita e Rivelazioni di Santa Gertrude*, by Father Clement Poggiali, O.S.M., Florence, 1886, p. 509.

gaining all the indulgences that he could in the course of the day, for the benefit of the souls in Purgatory. In order to encourage his companions in using special charity towards the departed, he often told them that he had offered to God, in favour of the holy souls, all his works, prayers, Masses and penitential practices. With a like intention, whenever he passed a church enriched with many indulgences, he made it a duty to go in, and would say to his companion: "Let us go in and help the poor dead." As it was impossible for him to visit churches whilst actually engaged in the missions, he obtained a special grant from Benedict XIV, enabling him and his companion to give the "Holy Land indulgences" three times a day and to apply them to the souls in Purgatory.<sup>1</sup>

The Heroic Act was enriched with numerous indulgences by Popes Benedict XIII, Pius VI and Pius IX.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Theatine Father, Gaspar Oriden, propagated a pious addition to it—*i.e.*, the custom of making the offering to God through the hands of the Blessed Virgin, so that she may choose particular souls to be thus helped by those suffrages, in accordance with God's holy Will. This addition, however, is no essential part of the Heroic Act.<sup>3</sup>

It is quite clear that, in making such an offering of our good works, we can transfer only their *satisfactory*, not their meritorious, value. This, as we said, is inalienable and may even be increased by reason of the charity that inspires the act in question. Hence, a person who makes the Heroic Act and thus runs the risk of having himself to spend a long time in Purgatory, in one sense loses nothing by his generosity;

<sup>1</sup> Vita, Roma, 1867, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Raccolta*, Roma, 1898, pp. 530 and *sqq.*, n. 302.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Collat. Brugenses*, 1927, p. 38.



for the very slightest increase of merit or of grace is worth incomparably more than the most rapid deliverance possible from purgatorial suffering. Dominic Soto,<sup>1</sup> in teaching this, gives as a reason that being freed from Purgatory is only the withdrawal of an obstacle, *i.e.*, a temporary one, to the Beatific Vision, whilst a fresh grace makes the soul more beautiful and pleasing in the sight of God. St Thomas, again, says: "By making satisfaction for another we merit what is worth more than the remission of a penalty, namely eternal life."<sup>2</sup>

15. In his book *All for Jesus*, Father Faber enumerates six advantages which accrue to us by offering all our indulgences for the souls in Purgatory. First, this act of piety greatly increases our merit, and consequently our right to glory. Secondly, it places each soul that we deliver into a peculiar state of obligation towards us, both on account of the singular benefit it receives from entering all the sooner into glory and also because of the immense sufferings from which it is delivered. Moreover it gives us consolation to think that those whom we have released from Purgatory are performing for us in heaven the great work of loving, praising and glorifying God on our behalf. Again, it adds fresh joy to the Church triumphant, from the fact that a new citizen who can sin no more is added to the heavenly hierarchy, whilst it brings comfort to the Church militant from the gain she has made of a new advocate. Besides, it secures a prompt application of our indulgences, which, in the possible case that we were in no want of them for ourselves, might remain for many years buried in the treasury of the Church. And, last of all, it entitles us to a speedy discharge of our own debt in Purgatory; for if tem-

<sup>1</sup> In IV Sent. dist. II, a. 1.

<sup>2</sup> In IV Sent. dist. XX, q. i, a. 2, qu. iii, sol. 3 ad 3.

poral alms are satisfactory above most other good works, much more so are spiritual alms. And if God requites a hundredfold him who gives up anything for his sake, we may be assured that, to recompense us for our generosity, he will so deal with us that we shall need little Purgatory, or he will inspire devout souls to pray for us.<sup>1</sup>

We may further add that, of course, Almighty God may, if he so chooses, derogate from his ordinary law and apply Christ's satisfactions immediately to our souls without indulgences. But, in any case, nobody who has made the Heroic Act need lose heart because he cannot count upon any satisfactions or indulgences for himself; for, as David says, "It is better to fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are many, than into the hands of man."<sup>2</sup>

It may finally be observed that the indulgences with which the Popes have enriched the practice show how pleasing this kind of spiritual charity is to God and the Church. Hence the devotion is no loss, but a true gain. If it ever seems to involve a loss, it can only be of such a kind as a man may suffer, who buries a little seed in the ground in hopes of reaping a plentiful harvest by and by.

16. A tree is known by its fruits. If, then, indulgences are a baneful institution, they must produce corruption of morals and weakening of the religious spirit. But what do impartial writers say about the fruits of the *Portiuncula* or of a Jubilee? As regards the former, Bourdaloue tells us that it has always been blessed by extraordinary fruits of sincere repentance; and that many of the faithful have turned, thanks to it, from a life of sin to a life of holiness; from forgetfulness of God to the practice of the most heroic virtue.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *All for Jesus*, c. iii, sect. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings xxiv 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Sermon pour la Fête de la Portiuncule*, Part III.

As to Jubilees, Bellarmine has no hesitation in stating that they produce such great fruits of repentance, such remarkable conversions, such numerous and striking works of piety, that a Jubilee year may well be called a Holy Year, a year pleasing to God: the most fruitful among all years.<sup>1</sup>

About the happy results of the Jubilee of 1825, mentioned above, Cardinal Wiseman speaks as follows: "I wish you could have seen not merely the churches filled, but the public places and squares crowded to hear the word of God—for churches could not contain the audience; I wish you could have seen the throng at every confessional and the multitudes that pressed round the altar of God to partake of its heavenly gift. I wish you could know the restitution of ill-gotten property which was made, the destruction of immoral and irreligious books which took place, the amendments of hardened sinners which date from that time, and then you would understand why men and women undertook the toilsome pilgrimage, and judge whether it was indulgence in crime and facility to commit sin that is proffered and accepted in such an institution."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bellarm., *De Indulg.* l. I., c. i.

<sup>2</sup> Wiseman, *Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*, lect. xii. Instead of frankly accepting such authoritative testimony, Mr. Lea prefers supposing that the Cardinal has been misled in his judgement of the *inward* effects produced by what he calls "the contagious hypnotism of enthusiastic multitudes" (p. 575). "The Cardinal," he says, "could only look upon the surface, and could not know what might be going on beneath it" (p. 576). Nay, more, borrowing violent and exaggerated accounts from obscure authors, he gives a highly-coloured description, in contrast to Wiseman's picture, of the disorders supposed to have been occasioned by pilgrimages of this kind. But, admitting that some disorders may have arisen, they were the exception, not the rule; also admitting, what Mr. Lea appears to insinuate, that very often the good effects of Jubilees, etc., were but passing ones, is it nothing to reconcile a sinner to God even for a time?

In the Bull *Properante ad exitum*, quoted above, Leo XIII confirms Cardinal Wiseman's testimony by his personal recollections.

Perhaps the most forcible testimony in favour of the good results of Jubilees lies in the titanic efforts made by unbelievers to prevent them from taking place. When such efforts proved vain, they took to falsifying history and to representing Jubilees as a cause of corruption and vice; sometimes, however, the overwhelming evidence to the contrary obliged them to acknowledge their good results. Thus, d'Alembert recognised that the Jubilee of 1775 had put off the Revolution for twenty years; and Voltaire also exclaimed: "One more Jubilee like this and it is all up with our philosophy."<sup>1</sup>

17. On the other hand, the founder of the Reformation let fall from his lips an explicit acknowledgement of the fatal effects produced all over Germany by the suppression of Catholic practices, including indulgences. "Since our doctrine has been preached," said Luther in a sermon delivered at Wittenberg in 1553, "the world is daily growing more wicked, more ungodly, more impudent; and men are more avaricious and more given to lasciviousness than they were under Popery. We see nothing everywhere but avarice, intemperance, drunkenness, impurity, shameful disorders, abominable passions." And elsewhere again: "Because they find themselves freed from the bonds and cords of Popery, men want also to throw off the Gospel and all the commandments of God; and now nothing is good, nothing is right but what suits their own pleasure and fancy. It would seem as if our Germany were possessed by the devil, since the great light of the Gospel has arisen over her. Youth is bold

<sup>1</sup> Both quoted by Beringer, *op. cit.*, I. Teil, vii, p. 50.

and untamed, and will not be guided; old age is stained with avarice, usury and many other sins.”<sup>1</sup>

No: Catholic practices do not lead to vice; and indulgences, particularly, are not a means of encouraging sin, as Protestants have declared; nor, again, are they a source of laxity in the Church, as Jansenists were once fond of saying. Let the faithful keep up the good practice, and the pastors continue to teach it, and we shall not fail to see their beneficial effect on both individuals and society at large.

18. A few remarks on the practice of gaining indulgences, whether for ourselves or for the departed, may here be added.

First, it would be wrong to condemn anyone who, in order to satisfy divine justice by his own sufferings, would choose not to have recourse to the more easy mode of doing so by means of indulgences. Some holy servants of God have deliberately refused to take this means of paying their own debts, not, indeed, from any contempt for these holy treasures, but from deeper hatred of sin and greater love of perfection. They valued indulgences and gained them for others; but for themselves they preferred suffering the penalty due for their sins with the utmost rigour and so paying what they owed to God, “even to the last farthing.”<sup>2</sup>

Next, let it be always remembered that it is against

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Beringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 47, 48. A glowing account of the falling off of the standard of morality in Germany through the advent of Lutheranism is given by Fr. Heinrich Denifle, O.P., in his work, *Luther und Luthertum*, Einleitung. See particularly pp. 22, 23. “Luthers Lehre,” writes Fr Denifle, “hat die Strömung des Niedergangs hinab zu jenem Zustand geführt, den er selbst öffentlich für weit schlechter erkannte und bekannte, als jenen unter dem Papsttum. Er konnte daraus kein Hehl machen, denn die Tatsachen riefen zu laut, mochte er auch noch so lächerliche Scheingründe zur Erklärung oder Entschuldigung vorführen” (p. 22. Mainz, 1904).

<sup>2</sup> Matt. v 26. Cf. Bened. XIV, *De Serv. Dei Beatif.* l. I, c. xxxi, n. 15. See also what we said above, Part II, c. vii, n. 14, p. 410.



the spirit of the Church to neglect fulfilling one's own duties for the sake of merely gaining indulgences. This would be the very opposite of true devotion, and as blameworthy as stealing our neighbour's substance in order therewith to give alms to the poor.

Again, with persons consecrated to God in the religious state, a desire of gaining indulgences "ought not," says St Thomas, "in any way to hinder religious observance. For, as regards eternal reward, religious earn more merit by serving their order and keeping their rule than by looking out for indulgences. True, they will have less remission of penalty by this means; but remission of penalty is a much smaller benefit than the attainment of life eternal."<sup>1</sup>

The faithful should also guard against the false idea that gaining indulgences is the very same thing as multiplying the "jewels in their crown" for eternity, and their claims to the Beatific Vision. Taken literally, this notion is simply false. The fact is that the first and immediate effect of an indulgence is to acquit the repentant sinner of his debt of temporal punishment and, in this respect, it is a deliverance from prison and bonds, but not the flight of a soul, filled with divine love, to its last end. Its effect concerns the sinner's personal interest rather than the love or glory of God. Increase of merits, and consequently of grace and glory, is but a secondary effect of indulgences and springs only from whatever good works we have done through the desire to gain the holy pardons; but the proper and immediate effect of an indulgence is exclusively the remission of temporal penalty due to sin after reconciliation.

It should, however, be observed that indulgences applied to the dead procure a direct increase of charity in him who gains them, because the motive that prompts

<sup>1</sup> *Suppl. q. xxvii, art. 2 ad 2m.*

him is the pure love of God and of his neighbour. The same thing must be said in the case of one who should gain an indulgence for a living person, were such a grant ever made.<sup>1</sup>

There is no need to dwell at great length on this point. What we have said is enough to show that to gain indulgences is not altogether the same thing as to sanctify oneself. Hence the faithful should be warned not to believe that they can increase their rights to eternal glory, in proportion to the number of years of indulgences they may gain.

19. "Many," says St Jerome, "fall into error from being ignorant of history."<sup>2</sup> This is particularly true in the matter of indulgences. Had the "reformers" earnestly studied the history of the Church—beginning with St Paul's absolution of the incestuous Corinthian, going on to the era of the martyrs, and carrying their researches throughout the Middle Ages right down to modern times—they would not have asserted so boldly that "the Romish doctrine concerning . . . pardons is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God."<sup>3</sup> They would have seen, in the present discipline of the Catholic Church, a faithful continuation and expression of the earliest traditions, only strengthened and perfected. Instead of representing the practice of indulgences as a cause of corruption, they would have acknowledged it to be, as it truly is—and as every Catholic knows that it is—a great spiritual benefit which we owe entirely to the sacred Passion of our divine Lord and Saviour.

20. But even without the long and laborious research involved in such a study of history it is possible to be

<sup>1</sup> See above, Part I, c. iii, n. 2, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Comment. in cap. ii Matt.

<sup>3</sup> Article XXII of Church of England.

convinced that indulgences, in the broad sense of the word, supply a human need in the natural as well as the supernatural order. The ordinary social relations established between man and man sufficiently prove this fact.

St Augustine informs us that, in the early ages of the Church, the Bishops often interceded with the magistrates in favour of culprits, that their sentences might be mitigated. The magistrates, in their turn, would intercede with the Bishops for penitents, that the rigour of their canonical penances might not be strictly adhered to in their case, as the sacred canons would otherwise have required.<sup>1</sup>

Temporal sovereigns, moreover, often imitated the Church in celebrating important anniversaries by a kind of "Jubilee," or amnesty from punishment. For instance, Edward III did this in the year 1362, when he kept his fiftieth birthday, by delivering all prisoners, forgiving all offences but treason, making new laws for his people's benefit and granting many privileges.

Indulgence, again, in its more obvious sense, is the foundation of peace in domestic and social life. On this view of it, Joseph de Maistre writes: "There is no Protestant father of a family who has not forgiven a child in disgrace, through the intercession and deserts of some other child with whom he is particularly pleased. There is not a Protestant sovereign who has not signed fifty 'indulgences' in the course of his reign, by bestowing an office, remitting or commuting a punishment etc., through the 'merits' of fathers, brothers, sons, relations or ancestors. . . . Blind or rebellious spirits may contest the principle of indulgences as they will: let them have their say. The

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* ad Macedonium, 547.

principle is that of reversion; it is the law of the world."<sup>1</sup>

If we want to see the same thing carried out on a larger and more public scale than that of families or courts, we need only call to mind, as a typical instance, the story, so well known in all its details, of the six citizens of Calais and King Edward III.

Strangely enough, the principle of "Indulgence" is carried out in Protestant England in somewhat unexpected ways and places. A striking example of this is referred to by Mr. Kegan Paul in his volume of Essays,<sup>2</sup> where he describes how the boys in a certain form at Eton were let off impositions, by virtue of an "exemption" obtained by proficiency in map-drawing. The exemption consisted in a corner of the successful map cut off and signed by the master, which the boy produces on the next occasion when he would naturally incur "lines," and which was accepted as a quittance for the penalty deserved: an *Indulgence* pure and simple, and a clear proof of the strength with which the idea is rooted in the English mind notwithstanding all attempts to remove it.

In conclusion, it is difficult to understand how Protestants can profess to reject the Catholic conception of indulgences, and yet believe, as many of them do, that after death there will be "a general indulgence," when all sins will be forgiven as to both guilt and penalty.

21. We may close this study on the origin, nature and development of indulgences in the Catholic Church with an anecdote told by Matthew Paris, in his *Major Historia Anglorum*.<sup>3</sup>

In the year 1228, an Archbishop from Greater Armenia

<sup>1</sup> *Soirées de St Pétersbourg*, t. ii, Entretien 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Faith and Unfaith*, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> London, 1571, p. 470.

came to St Albans Monastery. The monks asked him if he could tell them anything about a certain Joseph, much talked of by the people and said to have been present at our Lord's Passion. A knight who was among the Archbishop's attendants answered: "His Grace knows this Joseph very well and a little while before coming Westward entertained him at his own table in Armenia. When Christ was led by the Jews to Pilate, this man, then called Cartaphilus, was Pilate's doorkeeper; and when the Jews were dragging our Lord out of the Praetorium, after having caused him to be condemned to death, Cartaphilus pushed him violently with his fist, saying: 'Go faster, Jesus! Why dost thou tarry?' Jesus looked at him sternly, and said: 'I am going; but thou shalt wait until I come again.' After the Resurrection, Cartaphilus received baptism from Ananias, the same disciple who baptised St Paul, and took the name of Joseph. He was then thirty years old. When he had reached the age of a hundred, he had an illness which seemed incurable; but then he fell into a trance, was cured, and found himself gone back to the age at which he was when our Lord died. This rejuvenescence takes place every hundred years. He often lives in Armenia and other Eastern countries, and dwells with Bishops and other prelates. He is a pious man and leads a holy life, speaks little, and is content to answer the questions asked him about the things of days gone by. He refuses all presents, and is satisfied with the mere necessities of food and clothing. He sheds abundant tears, and looks forward with fear to the last coming of our Lord, though always hoping in his mercy, because he offended him through ignorance."

Fleury, in recording this fable<sup>1</sup> (which is clearly

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Eccl.*, l. LXXIX, n. 45.



the origin of the Wandering Jew),<sup>1</sup> says that one knows not what to wonder at most: the audacity of the knight in relating it, or the simplicity of the monks in believing it.

Now, the same thing, as it appears to us, may be said about the obstinate denial of indulgences as about the belief in the story of this *unindulged* Jew. One really cannot say which is more astonishing: the boldness of those who undertook to deny the reality of indulgences, in the face of so much evidence from Scripture and tradition, or the simplicity of those who believed the calumniators. At the same time, it must be remembered that the denial was inspired by private interest and hope of gain; whilst as to belief in the denial, that was extorted by fire and sword from an innocent people. Force took the place of justice, iniquity triumphed, and thus were the nations despoiled of their means of expiating sin. But "the poor man shall not be forgotten to the end: the patience of the poor shall not perish for ever. Arise, O Lord, let not man be strengthened: let the nations be judged in thy sight!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For more details on the legend of the Wandering Jew, see the *Dictionnaire des Légendes du Christianisme*, par M. le Comte de Douhet, pp. 728. *sqq.*, Migne.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. ix 19, 20.



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